THE OXUS AND THE INDUS.

BY

MAJOR EVANS BELL.

AUTHOR OF "RETROSPECTS AND PROSPECTS OF INDIAN POLICY," ETC.

27124 ac

RR 6.47

TRÜBNER & CO., 60 PATERNOSTER ROW.

1869.

Digitized with financial assistance from

NSDL

Technology, Trust & Reach

on 07 January, 2017

London: N. Trübner & Co.

954.73
Bel/Oxu
27124

Ref 954.03

THOMAS RICHARDS, 37, GREAT QUEEN STREET.

PREFACE.

Fifty more pages might have been added to this essay, in meeting by anticipation many easily foreseen objections to the policy here proposed, in detailed explanations of its exact limits, and of the process for carrying it out. Such an extension of my plan would have been premature, if not impertinent.

The dictation of practical details demands that thorough topographical and technical intelligence, that perfect knowledge of ways and means and persons, constantly modified by time and circumstance, to which a political critic in London can make no pretension. We may give the fullest credit for the requisite information and skill to the executive authorities in India. The fullest confidence may be placed in their zeal and ability to perform what the Nation desires and the Sovereign commands. But one great object of the following pages has been to show from recent experience that our local functionaries must not be trusted in India, any more than they are in Great Britain and Ireland, to guide Imperial affairs. Almost in direct proportion to the degree of their departmental dexterity, and the length of their Eastern residence, they are generally incapacitated for the higher branch of politics. A clear view of Imperial operations can only be obtained from the central watch tower.

On one point of detail I will venture to give a hint. With regard to the question, still apparently left open, of stationing a British Envoy or Consuls in Afghanistan, I am inclined to attribute great weight to the views expressed by Professor Vambéry of Pesth, who has received the significant compliment from the official and demi-official journals of St. Petersburg and Moscow, of being styled "*the implacable enemy of Russia.*"* If we are inattentive to the advice and warnings of that learned and enterprising traveller in Central Asia, Russia is not so neglectful, but takes note of every word he utters.

* See Appendix C, p. 56.

THE OXUS AND THE INDUS.

THE Eastern Question, viewed with exclusive regard to the interests of Great Britain, identical in this instance with the interests of humanity, is nothing more than this,—Shall British or Russian influence predominate in the regions between the Oxus and the Indus? If all the Provinces of Afghanistan can be united under one strong Government, if the rulers of Balkh and Herat can be enabled to hold their own against all comers, in friendly concert with the rulers of India, the Eastern Question is settled for us. Russian agents at Teheran, and even in Turkey, might then be left to do their worst. We, among all the nations of Europe, need then care the least about the occupancy of Constantinople. Baffled and checked in Central Asia, the expansive impulse of Russia must be drawn more closely within the range of European diplomacy, where Great Britain cannot be isolated. France, Italy, and Austria, very indifferent as to the fate of Cabul and Bokhara, will always insist on a controlling voice in the Levant.

In stating the problem concisely, I do not pretend to set forth anything new or original. It will be seen by-and-by that we have sometimes mismanaged it, that we have very often, and very recently, neglected or refused to consider the matter at all, but whenever we have condescended to give it any attention, our policy has been always the same. The formation of a strong and friendly Government in Afghanistan was the aim of our policy in 1839, when we carried Shah Sujah to the throne of Cabul. Such was the aim of our policy in 1855, when we made a treaty of "perpetual peace and friendship" with the Ameer Dost

Mohammed Khan and "his heirs."* Such was the aim of our policy in 1857, when under a fresh treaty we gave the same Ameer material assistance, "to defend and maintain his present possessions."† Such, doubtless, is our aim now in furnishing his son, Sher Ali Khan, with supplies of money and arms. And such, we may suppose, will be the aim of the new engagements with that Prince, which Lord Mayo is understood to be meditating.

There is no dispute as to our object. The only dispute is as to the means by which it is to be attained.

Hitherto the object has not been attained. Hitherto the means successively employed by us have signally failed.

After a military and political struggle protracted through more than three years, after the expenditure of nearly twenty millions sterling, and the destruction of an entire British army, the King whom we had carried to a throne in 1839, found a bloody grave in a ditch outside his capital in 1842, amid "events which brought into question his fidelity to the Government by which he was restored."‡ The avenging victories of Nott and Pollock, though their moral effect was invaluable at the time, could not blind the eyes of India and the world to what had really occurred, or blot out the memory of an awful disaster. The broad facts were but too obvious. The British Power had receded, leaving behind it ruin and disorder, having lost much and suffered much, having gained nothing at all. When our forces left the country, nothing had been settled, nothing had been established, nothing had been changed by our intervention, except that the people had learned to hate us. For the following ten years, British influence in Afghanistan was almost entirely extinguished, and its chieftains were exposed more absolutely than before to the advances and menaces of their powerful neighbours.

In that interval, however, the restored Ameer Dost Mohammed, having made hostile demonstrations in vain during the Punjaub wars, and fruitlessly incited the hill

* *Collection of Treaties*, Calcutta, (Longman and Co., London) vol. ii, p. 430, and see *Appendix* A. † *Ibid.*, p. 431.

‡ Lord Ellenborough's Proclamation of October 1st, 1842; *Kaye's War in Afghanistan*, vol. iii, p. 376.

tribes of the Peshawur border against us for several years, perceived that we held with a firm grasp our new possession on his frontier; and the pressure of Persia, encouraging intrigues and rivalry in his own family, beginning to shake his authority, the Ameer in 1854 made friendly overtures to our Government. By the Treaty of 1855, the Ameer Dost Mohammed gained absolution for the past, and a clear recognition of his title as an independent Sovereign. If, which is very probable, this policy of reconciliation can be shown to have helped in the establishment of a central authority at Cabul, it was so far conducive, though in a small way, towards the achievement of our great object, the consolidation of Afghanistan into a strong and united State. But it cannot be pretended that the measures of 1855 were successful or sufficient for that great object. Before the end of 1856, the King of Persia had occupied Herat with a large army, and claimed imperial supremacy over the whole of Afghanistan. This led to the costly Persian war, and to the second Treaty with Dost Mohammed in 1857, by which, without actually guaranteeing his "present possessions in Balkh, Cabul, and Candahar," we undertook to assist him with money and munitions of war "to defend and maintain" them "against Persia."*

Persia was coerced by our fleet and army; and the new Treaty with Dost Mohammed proved to have been most opportunely concluded, for if we had been on bad terms with the Afghans in 1857, they might have thrown their weight into the scale against us with fearful, perhaps fatal, effect. But this accidental benefit could not have been foreseen. The limited and temporary advantage of these measures certainly failed to secure our great object of an orderly and united state in Afghanistan, permanently amenable to British influence. The mission of Major (now Major-General) H. B. Lumsden and his brother to Candahar was arranged on terms so ill-considered, and so utterly unsecured, that our envoys were kept more like prisoners than guests, and were constantly in danger of assassination. As if we had exhausted all our resources

* *Collection of Treaties*, vol. ii, p. 431.

in this humiliating experiment, every opportunity of intervention and intercourse was thrown away between the return of the Lumsdens in 1858, and the death of Dost Mohammed in 1863. That greatest of all possible opportunities was not merely rejected, it was perverted to our damage and disgrace.

The right of primogeniture has never prevailed in Afghanistan, or in any Mohammedan State. Such a right would be obviously incompatible with these peculiar incidents of a polygamous household,—the absolute legitimacy of all acknowledged sons, and the inequality of their rank and consideration in the family according to the position of their mothers. Amid varying customs of succession to the throne in different countries, one rule is universally recognised as perfectly conformable with Mussulman law, that the reigning Sovereign may select from among his sons that one whom he may consider most worthy to succeed him. In accordance with this patriarchal usage, the Ameer Dost Mohammed had chosen Gholam Hyder Khan as heir-apparent,—who, under that title, concluded with our Government the Treaty of 1855. Gholam Hyder, Sher Ali Khan the present Ameer, and their more noted brother, Mohammed Akbar Khan, were all sons of the Ameer's favourite wife, a lady of high descent. On Gholam Hyder's death,—Akbar Khan having died some years previously,—the Ameer nominated Sher Ali Khan as his successor; and, on his own death-bed, in the camp before Herat, confirmed the selection in a family council, and recorded it in a written testament. Dost Mohammed died on June 9th, 1863. All these facts were duly notified to the Governor-General of India.

• The succession of Sher Ali Khan is thus described in an article of the *Edinburgh Review* for January 1867, since avowed and accepted as a demi-official defence of Sir John Lawrence's foreign policy.

"Sher Ali Khan it was whom Dost Mohammed, some time before the expedition to Herat, had publicly selected as his successor, passing over the claims of both the elder Princes, Afzul Khan and Azim Khan. The selection, according to family custom, was authoritative. Sher Ali ever since had borne the designation of heir-apparent; and when Dost Mohammed died,

none ventured to question his title to succeed. Even Azim Khan himself in that first hour of confusion was fain to join in the general homage due to Sher Ali as rightful Ameer of Afghanistan."*

The capture of Herat, the last and crowning triumph of Dost Mohammed's memorable career, was received with apparent indifference both in London and Calcutta. The *Times*, which may be considered as a tolerably fair exponent of the ruling opinion in high places, set down the whole affair as "a battle of kites and crows," and declared the contest for Herat, "though so inexhaustibly interesting for Afghans and Persians," to be "of no concern to us."† It is extremely doubtful whether the same view was taken at St. Petersburg.

It may have been difficult for most Englishmen to look so far East, when every eye was fixed on the gigantic struggle of slavery and freedom in the West, from which almost every one had so much,—politically, socially or commercially,—to hope or to fear. In the summer of 1863 the civil war in the United States was at its height, and the cotton-famine of Lancashire (the touch-stone of moral progress in Great Britain) had carried a golden harvest to India. The wealth of Bombay was boiling over, but had not yet reached the point of evaporation. At Calcutta financial affairs were in the ascendant; 1862 was the first year since the Rebellion of 1857 in which there had not been a deficit, in which the Home Charges had not been defrayed from loans raised on the London Stock Exchange. Great was official exultation about that time at the newly discovered elasticity of the Indian revenue, continuously manifested ever since in a very remarkable manner, though counterbalanced in a manner equally remarkable, by the elasticity of the expenditure.‡ Visions of perpetual

* *Edinburgh Review*, No. 255, January 1867, p. 19.

† *The Times*, August 19th, 1863.

‡ The expenditure of India in the official year 1856-7, including the Home Charges, was a little under thirty-four millions sterling. The expenditure for the year 1868-9 is estimated at somewhat over forty-eight millions, exceeding the revenue, though that has increased forty per cent in ten years, by more than two millions and a half. The deficit for the year 1867-8 was £1,610,517. A loan of five millions is now required to square accounts. This does not strike one at first sight as being an example of good stewardship in a time of profound peace.

prosperity ruled the hour all over India in 1863. No one seems to have had a thought for Central Asia. The policy of 1839, 1855, and 1857, was completely forgotten, or remembered only to be reviled. There was no one to remind our Government that promptitude and decision on their part might prevent a war of succession in the dominions of Dost Mohammed, and keep the Afghan State undivided, connected with us by new ties and willing obligations.

Never did our Government stand more in need of a reminder, had it only been a good newspaper article. When the crisis produced by the fall of Herat and the death of Dost Mohammed pressed most strongly for consideration, the Governor-General, Lord Elgin, was dying. The Indian journals of July 24th, 1863, report the serious illness of the Viceroy at Simla. He rallied a little, but died on November 20th, at Dhurmsala, in the valley of Cashmere.

All the members of the Governor-General's Council were at Calcutta, where the routine business of Government was carried on. The Foreign Secretary, Colonel (now Sir Henry) Durand, had accompanied the Viceroy on his tour. At the time of Lord Elgin's lamented death, Sher Ali Khan's overtures for our recognition had met with no response. Although the desire of Dost Mohammed for our support in settling the succession in his family was made sufficiently manifest when the Treaty of 1855 was concluded for the Ameer, "*and on the part of his heirs,*" by his son, Gholam Hyder, "as the representative of Ameer Dost Mohammed Khan, *and in person on his own account as heir-apparent;*"* and again, when, on the death of Gholam Hyder, the Ameer informed the Government of India that he had nominated one of his younger sons, Sher Ali Khan, to succeed to all his dominions, the language and conduct of the British authorities, on every occasion between Dost Mohammed's death and the final success of Sher Ali Khan, repeatedly left the field quite open for a fratricidal war. Though all history, and all political science might have taught us that no combination of untoward events could conduce to the disunion and disorder of the

* *Collection of Treaties*, vol. ii, p. 431, see *Appendix* A.

Afghan territories so surely as a disputed succession, or promote so directly the designs of a rival Power, we neglected all the chances that offered, and all the means at our disposal for founding a durable settlement.

There ought not to have been a moment's doubt or hesitation as to Sher Ali Khan's title. We had explicitly acknowledged the right of Dost Mohammed to nominate his successor when the Treaty of 1855 was ratified by the Governor-General. A second nomination, made by Dost Mohammed on the death of the first heir-apparent, was duly notified to our Government. On the death of his father, the designated heir peaceably assumed the reins of power. No one denied or disputed his right. His brothers professed submission to his authority. Why was not this perfectly regular succession promptly recognised by the British Government?

In the absence of the consultative Minutes,—if any were recorded,—and of the other official documents of the day, we can only conjecture now,—as the Afghans, of all parties, probably conjectured then,—that, under some predominant influence at our political head-quarters, Sher Ali Khan was not the British candidate,—that our Government for the time being would have preferred one of his brothers; and, though not prepared to support our own man openly, hoped that something might turn up for his advantage, if we deferred as long as possible the recognition of the legitimate successor.

That there are considerable grounds for imputing this half-hearted and faithless policy to one or more of the high functionaries then in power will hardly, I think, be disputed.

A pamphlet, recently published at Calcutta, highly eulogistic of Sir John Lawrence's foreign policy, gives the following retrospective glance at the unworthy suspicions and unlawful self-seekings that misled the British authorities:

"There were many who believed that Mohammed Azim Khan was superior in capacity to Shere Ali Khan, and that he was more loyally disposed towards the British Government during the crisis of 1857 than any other Afghan Sirdar."*

* *Foreign Policy of Sir John Lawrence*, (reprinted from the "Englishman," of January 4th, 1869) Calcutta, 1869, p. 7.

Here is an extract from a letter of the Calcutta Correspondent of the *Times*, understood to be identical with the Editor of the *Friend of India*, and a person generally well informed as to the doings of the Indian Foreign Office. This letter, dated July 23rd, 1863, a month after Dost Mohammed's death, appeared in the *Times* of August 28th. "The new Ameer, Sher Ali Khan," says our own Correspondent, "is as notoriously hostile to the English alliance as his brother by a different mother, and rival, Azim Khan, is in favour of it."

Again in his letter of August 22nd, 1863, published in the *Times* of September 28th, he calls Azim Khan "our friend."

I strongly suspect the real origin of these rumours to have been that Azim Khan, having been for some years Governor of the districts of Koorum and Khost, bordering on the British frontier, had taken full advantage of every opportunity of intercourse with English officers to sound his own praises, and to spread a belief that he alone was friendly, and the rest of the family hostile. During his pensioned retirement at Rawulpindee, on British territory, in 1865, he probably did his best to strengthen the impression in his favour. I cannot help feeling somewhat confirmed in this view by the following passages from Lord Lawrence's speech in the House of Lords on April 19th. Speaking of the Treaty concluded with Dost Mohammed in 1855, he said :—

"Sir Herbert Edwardes" (then Commissioner of Peshawur) "put himself into communication with a son of the Ameer, who was then Governor of a border province of Afghanistan" (this was Azim Khan) "and through him made arrangements with the father. I was then the chief civil and military authority in the Punjab, and with my consent he allowed the son of the Ameer to say that if his father was willing to come forward we should meet him half-way."

And after relating the death of Afzul Khan, the eldest son of Dost Mohammed, who by Azim Khan's agency,—as we shall see,—contrived to dispossess the Ameer Sher Ali of part of his dominions, and ruled at Cabul from June, 1866, to October, 1867, he said :—

"His brother, who had first sought relations with us" (Azim Khan) "ascended the throne. The Ameer," (a title quite unwarranted by Azim Khan's brief usurpation) "however, did not fulfil the expectations of his friends. Some of those who had gained him his throne fell off, and after some months he was expelled from the country."

In the article of the *Edinburgh Review* for January, 1867, Azim Khan is pronounced to have been "incomparably Afzul Khan's superior in state-craft," while Sher Ali is declared "not equal to Azim Khan as a statesman," and it is said that his "political proclivities had hitherto been towards a Persian, rather than an English alliance." The notions that swayed the Foreign Office at Calcutta in 1863, come out very clearly in the following passage:—

"Without any real love for the English, Azim Khan had yet established a strong claim upon our goodwill by the course he adopted in 1857, when the whole Afghan nation clamoured to be led down the passes that they might join the mutinous Sepoys in a meritorious extermination of the infidel English. Dost Mohammed would, perhaps, have been unable to resist the popular cry but for Azim Khan's steadfast and openly declared advocacy of the English cause."*

I am inclined to attribute these supposed good offices to Azim Khan's own invention, or to that artful manipulation of the British Moonshee, or news-writer at Cabul, in which, as the *Edinburgh* Reviewer tells us, that wily Sirdar was so great an adept.† Such considerations, however, even if they had been well founded, ought to have been far beneath a great Government like ours. We could well afford to despise the evil dispositions of six years back; while any reliance upon what is called the "loyalty" or friendship of one Afghan Chief more than another, was a very weak pretext for slighting the lawful successor, a totally inadequate excuse for deviating from the straightforward course of full and immediate recognition.

Not until December, 1863, six months after his father's death, and one month after Lord Elgin's death,—when Sir William Denison, as senior Governor, had taken pro-

* *Edinburgh Review*, No. 255, January 1867, p. 18.
† *Ibid.*, January 1867, pp. 31, 32, 33.

visional charge of the Viceregal office,—was Sher Ali Khan recognised by our Government as the Ameer of Afghanistan.

Whether the Ameer and the British Empire were indebted for their improved relations, to the sound judgment of Sir William Denison, or to the resumption of control by the Members of Council, from whom the Foreign Secretary, Colonel Durand, had been separated during his tour with Lord Elgin, cannot be at present ascertained. It may be useful to see what account is given by the *Friend of India*, a journal generally accredited with some authority as an organ, or at least as an obsequious partisan, of the Calcutta Foreign Office. On December 24th, 1863, the Editor writes as follows :—

"When the late Dost Mohammed appointed his son," (Sher Ali Khan) "his heir and successor, he duly notified the fact to our Government.

"So long as it was doubtful whether the new Ameer would make good his claims," (*i. e.*, so long as our countenance would have been useful to him,) "we abstained from recognising his position. But now that his opponents, Azim Khan and Afzul Khan are quiet, however personally discontented, our Government has done only what is just and politic in strengthening his power by their formal recognition."

This policy has been called half-hearted and faithless. It was half-hearted, because we virtually demurred to the succession of Sher Ali Khan without venturing to object openly, to support another candidate, or even to impose conditions for our recognition. It was faithless, because by the Treaty of 1855 we had distinctly accepted the law of inheritance instituted by Dost Mohammed, and on the decease of the heir named in that Treaty, the nomination of Sher Ali Khan in his place was duly communicated to our Government. In that same Treaty we had promised "never to interfere,"* and now, on the very first occasion after Dost Mohammed's death, under the pretence of impartiality and non-intervention, we practised the most injurious interference, by "abstaining from recognising" the reigning Prince's "position." At the most critical conjuncture possible, the first succession in a new dynasty,

* *Appendix* A.

we struck a blow at the very foundation-stone of a strong and stable Government.

The *Friend of India* talks of Sher Ali's "opponents." He had no opponents, until, by "abstaining from recognising his position" as ruling Ameer, which the *Friend's* language admits he had made good, we encouraged his brothers to conspire and rebel against him. The well understood fact that there were secret rivals in his family ought to have been an additional plea for prompt recognition, if perfect good faith was to be preserved.

I have said that the tardy recognition of the new Ameer in December, 1863, while Sir William Denison was at the head of affairs at Calcutta, produced improved relations between the Government of India and the Ruler of Afghanistan. But it must not be supposed that a complete redress and rectification of the injury done to Sheer Ali Khan, was thereby effected, or that full confidence in British good faith and friendly intentions can have been thereby restored. The mischief was in a great measure done, and irretrievable. A flat denial of Sher Ali's inherent right to the succession under his father's appointment, and a more or less concealed preference on our part for some other member of the family, were obviously involved in postponing his recognition for six months. Unless the actual letter of recognition contained some judiciously evasive apology for the delay,—attributing it, let us say, to Lord Elgin's illness and death,—the difficulty of avoiding a denial of Sher Ali's right to the inheritance must have been almost insurmountable. After so long a silence, some explanation was evidently called for.

Looking at the antecedents and known characteristics of those who then conducted the executive duties and details of the Foreign Department,—looking, also, at the general tone and temper of those days, as reflected in documents that have seen the light, and in those Calcutta journals which most closely represent the official spirit,—it does not appear very likely that any extraordinary caution or consideration was observed in drafting the letter recognising Sher Ali Khan as Ameer of Afghanistan.

If, which appears much more probable, the letter of recognition was couched in some such terms as those just quoted from the *Friend of India*,—if Sher Ali Khan was told, in substance, that we had "abstained from recognising his position," "so long as it was doubtful whether" he "could make good his claims," if he was told that the Government of India would not forestall the choice of the Afghan Chieftains and people,—then it is clear that we ignored his title, and recognised him only by virtue of possession. We admitted the *fact* only, not the *right*. By so doing we informed Sher Ali Khan, his usual advisers, and his malcontent relatives,—sure to have at least one informant in the Durbar,—that the British Government had no regard for any law or custom of succession, would have recognised any one of the brothers, and cared so little for Dost Mohammed's nominee as to have waited six months in the expectation—perhaps in the hope—that he would be supplanted by one of his rivals. The question of succession was thus degraded by the British Government from a point of *right* into a point of *fact*, from a matter of Mussulman law, family compact, and treaty engagements, into a mere matter of brute force and casual possession. It followed as a logical consequence of this policy,—and equally whether proclaimed in words or not,—that we should always esteem possession as the best, if not the only proof of sovereignty, and that if any one of the brothers could contrive to gain the capital, and to make himself Ameer *in fact* by the death or flight of his predecessor, he would meet with no hindrance or interruption from our Government, and would be recognised—to say the least,—as freely and as promptly as Sher Ali Khan had been.

This may not have been the deliberate policy, or even the conscious line of reasoning, adopted by our Government; the lesson drawn by the rival parties in Afghanistan may not have been what is here suggested; but most certainly our Government acted as if it wished to teach that lesson, and the rival parties in Afghanistan acted as if they had learned it. And the subsequent action of our Government, down to December 1868, was entirely in ac-

cordance with the lesson it had taught. We recognised three brothers, one after another, as Ameers of Cabul, solely by virtue of their holding the capital. In apparent obedience to the same rule, we have now reverted to the first of the three.

It is by no means clear that our deferred and imperfect recognition of December 1863 did really produce the effect in strengthening the power of Sher Ali Khan that it was probably intended to produce.* The happy moment was past. The recognition that might have conveyed an expression of respect for the last wishes of Dost Mohammed, and a word of congratulation and good counsel for his successor, now carried with it an air of scorn for the father's memory, a personal insult for the son, an effectual incentive for his rivals and enemies.

Sher Ali Khan was recognised by our Government, with a doubt implied,—if not expressed,—as to the superiority of his claim, in December 1863, six months after his installation. Early in 1864 his elder half-brother, Mohammed Afzul Khan, who, as the *Friend of India* tells us, had remained "quiet" till then, displayed the first signs of disaffection, as if he now felt himself let loose.

In January 1864, one month after the recognition of Sher Ali Khan, and just about the time when Afzul Khan was beginning to show his teeth, Sir John Lawrence arrived at Calcutta, and assumed the office of Viceroy of India.

The first battle of the civil war, destined to last, with but little intermission, for four years and a half, was fought between the the Ameer Sher Ali Khan and his half-brother Afzul Khan in June 1864, when the latter was defeated. Immediately after this battle, Afzul Khan made a show of submission to his brother's legitimate supremacy, and a reconciliation between them took place. Within a very short time, however, some new conspiracy having been discovered, Afzul Khan was arrested by the Ameer's orders, and kept for a short time in close confinement. It is some

* "But now that his opponents, Azim Khan and Afzul Khan, are quiet, however personally discontented, our Government has done only what is just and politic, in strengthening his power by their formal recognition." *Ante*, p. 10.

slight indication of the progress of more humane views, that, notwithstanding advice strongly urged on the Ameer, and numerous precedents in the Afghan annals of the last half-century, Afzul Khan was neither put to death nor deprived of sight. His imprisonment was very soon mitigated into a sort of honourable retirement in the Ameer's household, where he was treated with respect and indulgence, and, though constantly attended and watched, allowed to take exercise on horseback.

It deserves, also, to be recorded to the credit of Sher Ali Khan, that he had previously treated his brother Azim Khan, "our friend," and perhaps the most formidable of his rivals, with clemency and generous confidence, although Azim Khan had fully betrayed his ambitious designs, and had fallen into the Ameer's power. In August 1863, as the *Edinburgh* Reviewer tells us, Sher Ali, by a rapid march,

"Compelled Azim Khan, who was hardly prepared for such prompt action, to tender a formal submission. The two brothers then embraced: Azim Khan swore fealty to the Ameer, and in return obtained a confirmation of all the dignities and emoluments he had enjoyed during the late reign."*

In April 1864, Azim Khan again broke out in rebellion, and was again overpowered by the Ameer. In the words of the *Edinburgh* Reviewer,

"Azim Khan's venture utterly collapsed. Abandoned by his troops, Azim Khan on May 16th, 1864, fled for refuge into British territory, and became a pensioner of Sir John Lawrence at Rawul Pindee."†

Afzul Khan's arrest, amply justified by his previous conduct and by subsequent events, was, of course, denounced by his adherents as an act of treachery on the part of the Ameer Sher Ali. All the hostile elements exploded in rapid succession. In a battle before Candahar, fought in June 1865, the Ameer's eldest son, Mohammed Ali, a young man of great promise, was killed. This was a terrible blow to Sher Ali Khan. For many months he remained at Candahar in a state of despondent apathy, almost amounting to melancholy madness, while his enemies

* *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 19. † *Ibid.*, p. 20.

were gathering strength from all quarters. His brother Azim Khan, "our friend,"* returned from his pensioned refuge on British territory,—only seventy miles from the Afghan frontier,—and joined his nephew, Abd-oor-Rahman, son of the imprisoned Afzul Khan, with all the troops he could muster. The united forces of uncle and nephew marched upon Cabul, and occupied the place without much difficulty in February 1866. The loss of his capital roused Sher Ali from his gloomy lethargy. He took the field once more,—his brother Afzul Khan accompanying the camp under the usual restraint,—but was completely defeated by his brother, Azim Khan, on the 10th of May, 1866, and compelled to retreat upon Candahar. The Chiefs in whose charge Afzul Khan had been placed by the Ameer, went over with their troops to the enemy. The victors re-entered Cabul in triumph, and proclaimed the released Afzul Khan Ameer of Afghanistan.

Henceforth, up to October 1868, when Sir John Lawrence sent a congratulatory answer to the letter from Sher Ali Khan, announcing his decisive victory near Ghuznee and reoccupation of Cabul, our Government seems to have been betrayed into a series of errors, partly from trusting to false information, partly from imperfect appreciation of the undisputed facts before it, but chiefly from the defective moral basis on which its policy was founded.

Let it be granted for the present, that at the period of Dost Mohammed's death, it was neither just nor expedient for us to attempt any active interference in the affairs of Afghanistan. What ought to have been our policy?

We were still bound to the Afghan State by the obligations of the Treaty of 1855, under which, as already explained,† the British Government had explicitly acknowledged the right of the reigning Ameer to nominate his own successor. This prerogative, familiar and acceptable to Mussulman nations, was obviously the most effective process for securing a peaceful transfer of power, and for preventing the disintegration of the united Afghan Provinces. The nomination of Sher Ali Khan was formally communicated to our Government. Yet when the time

* *Ante*, p. 8. † *Ante*, p. 6.

came for giving effect to this nomination, instead of raising our voice promptly and emphatically in its favour, our voice was so late and our language so uncertain, as to excite strange rumours of our real wishes and intentions. Instead of upholding the wholesome prerogative which we had previously helped to establish, and which offered the only security for peace and good order, we contrived to unsettle everything, and to give the signal for war.

For when it was seen that the great British Government, which had made treaties with the Ameer Dost Mohammed and "his heirs," refused its moral support to the Ameer Sher Ali Khan, and refrained from friendly intercourse with him, the natural assumption was that we would have preferred, and should still prefer, another member of the family. This may or may not have been—I am inclined to think it was,—a true assumption, but at any rate it was irresistible, not only in the bazars of Afghanistan, but in the streets of Calcutta. It was proclaimed by the press of India. Azim Khan was not called "our friend" by mere guess, without some leakage of sayings and doings in the Council Chamber and the Foreign Office.

Let us, however, take a fresh departure,—set down our dilatory recognition as an unfortunate accident,—and observe what was the course of our Government after the arrival of Sir John Lawrence at Calcutta, when Sher Ali's troubles had commenced.

Sher Ali Khan, publicly chosen by the Ameer Dost Mohammed, and formally announced to our Government as heir and successor to the State, had to wait, as we have seen, six months before his position was recognised. His brother, Afzul Khan, raised from captivity to the throne, had only to wait six weeks to be recognised as "Walee of Cabul."

On May 21st, 1866, Afzul Khan was installed at Cabul, after the events already described. On July 11th, when the Ameer Sher Ali Khan had reigned for three years, and while he still, in Sir John Lawrence's own words, "retained his authority and power over a large portion of Afghanistan," still "ruled in Candahar and in Herat," the British Viceroy addressed his rival as "Walee of Cabul,"

in a letter which breathes in every line what may be termed the spirit of partition.

The entire letter, which I extract from the demi-official article in the *Edinburgh Review* for January 1867, runs as follows :—

"*To His Highness, Sirdar* MOHAMMED AFZUL KHAN, *Walee of Cabul, dated Simla, 11th July,* 1866.

"I have received your Highness's friendly letter, giving an account of late events in Afghanistan. It has been to me a source of sincere sorrow that misfortunes such as your Highness describes have befallen the great house of the Barukzyes, and that calamities so heavy and protracted have been experienced by the people. It was, and still continues to be, the hearty desire of the British Government that the Afghan nation should remain under the strong and united rule of the Barukzye family, and that this family, endowed by the Creator of the world with wisdom to be at peace among themselves, should be respected both in their own country and by surrounding nations. Wherefore it has been a source of distress and anxiety of mind to me that strife and division have arisen among the members of your Highness's family.

"My friend! your Highness alludes to the friendship which existed between your Highness's renowned father and the British Government, and your Highness says that from this Government your Highness expects similar treatment. It is the earnest wish of the British Government that that friendship should be perpetuated. But while I am desirous that the alliance between the two Governments should be firm and lasting, it is incumbent on me to tell your Highness that it would be inconsistent with the fame and reputation of the British Government to break off its alliance with Ameer Sher Ali Khan, who has given to it no offence, so long as he retains his authority and power over a large portion of Afghanistan. That Ameer still rules in Candahar and in Herat.

"My friend! the relations of this Government are with the actual rulers of Afghanistan. If your Highness is able to consolidate your Highness's power in Cabul, and is sincerely desirous of being a friend and ally of the British Government, I shall be ready to accept your Highness as such; but I cannot break the engagements with Ameer Sher Ali Khan, and I must continue to treat him as the ruler of that portion of Afghanistan over which he retains control. Sincerity and fair dealing induce me to write thus plainly and openly to your Highness."*

It may be that our Government really intended in this letter of July 11th, 1866, to hold the balance evenly,

* *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 33.

with, perhaps, as claimed for it by the *Edinburgh* reviewer, some "preference" for the Ameer Sher Ali, as having been recognised first. If we may trust the English version of the letter, the secondary title "Sirdar" is prefixed to Afzul Khan's name, while that of "Ameer" is still given to Sher Ali. On Sir John Lawrence's principle, avowed in this letter, Sher Ali Khan could hardly be deposed by us from his father's rank and title, to which he had succeeded, "so long as he retained his authority and power over a large portion of Afghanistan." Even this principle, however, was not observed after Sher Ali Khan's next defeat. In February 1867, Afzul Khan was greeted by the British Viceroy as "Ameer"; and on his death in October 1867, the same title was conferred upon his brother Azim Khan, "our friend," who still retained possession of the capital city.

But our Government, whatever its intention may have been, did not hold the balance evenly, nor was its recognition of Afzul Khan deferred or imperfect, when the Viceroy addressed him as "Walee of Cabul." That was no mere honorary distinction. It was the term employed in our treaties with his father, Dost Mohammed. Afzul Khan had been carried by a rush to the capital of the Kingdom, as the result of a single victory. He had thus got possession of the palace and the mint, the archives and the insignia of state, and was enabled to set up the semblance of central and supreme authority. This may have imposed on the vulgar, and probably brought recruits and resources to the insurgent cause. But it ought not to have imposed on the Imperial Government of India. With whatever reservations our Government may have cloaked their recognition, Afzul Khan was hailed by them as "Walee of Cabul," within six weeks of his reappearance on the scene in that newly-assumed character. They cared not for his qualifications or claims for the part; it was enough for them that he had possession of the stage.

And after all, what did the reservations of this letter amount to? Simply to a refusal "to break off the alliance with the Ameer Sher Ali Khan," "so long as he retains his authority and power over a large portion of Afghani-

stan." "My friend," says the British Viceroy, "the relations of this Government are with the actual rulers of Afghanistan. *If your Highness is able to consolidate your power in Cabul, and is sincerely desirous of being a friend and ally of the British Government, I shall be ready to accept your Highness as such.*"

In plain terms:—Go in and win! If Afzul Khan and his followers took this letter as a broad hint that they must follow up their first success, and finish their adversary, so as to furnish the British Government with a decent excuse "*to break off its alliance with the Ameer Sher Ali Khan,*" it was only the natural conclusion for them to draw. What a tone, what an attitude for a great Government like ours to assume! Called by its vast responsibilities and interests as the Imperial Power of India, to arbitrate between contending parties, and appealed to from both sides, it bids them fight it out.

Meanwhile, until Afzul Khan could get the better of his brother, and "consolidate his power in Cabul," the British Viceroy recognised him as "Walee," or Ruler "of Cabul,"—the very title that his father, Dost Mohammed, had assumed in his treaties with the British Government.

The Viceroy says in his letter:—"I cannot break the existing engagements with Ameer Sher Ali Khan, and I must continue to treat him as the ruler of that portion of Afghanistan over which he retains control." I am not aware that there were then any other "existing engagements" with Ameer Sher Ali Khan except the Treaty of 1855, concluded for "his Highness Ameer Dost Mohammed Khan, Walee of Cabul and of those countries of Afghanistan now in his possession" by Gholam Hyder, "in person on his own account as heir apparent."* Sher Ali had, first, succeeded to the position of "heir apparent," with the knowledge and assent of our Government, and, secondly, to the position of "Walee of Cabul and of those countries of Afghanistan now in his possession." How then could we profess a desire not to "break existing engagements," when on the first reverse of our ally, in the

* *Ante*, p. 6.

crisis of a civil war, we recognised his rival as Walee of Cabul, and treated the Ameer himself only as Lord of what he stood on—"as the ruler of that portion of Afghanistan over which he retains control."

When the Viceroy's letter was written, the Ameer Sher Ali Khan retained control not merely over "a large portion," but over by far the larger portion of Afghanistan. According to the *Edinburgh* Reviewer, the Ameer was then in possession of "the districts of Khelat-i-Ghilzye, Candahar, Ghirishk, Furrah, and Herat," while "Fyz Mahomed was in open insurrection" in his favour, "at Tukhtapool" in Balkh, and his rival, Afzul Khan, held "nothing but Cabul and Ghuznee,"* and had only held these for six weeks. Yet this was the time chosen, with strange alacrity, by the British Viceroy, for addressing Afzul Khan in the terms prescribed by the Treaty of 1855, as "Walee of Cabul."

Nor was the more high-sounding title withheld very long. We learn from the *Punjaub Administrative Report* for 1866-7, that when Afzul Khan announced the defeat of the Ameer Sher Ali on the 17th of January, 1867, near Khelat-i-Ghilzye, a second letter was addressed to him by Sir John Lawrence, in which the Viceroy congratulated "*His Highness the Ameer Mohammed Afzul Khan, Walee of Cabul and Candahar*," upon "an event which seemed likely to bring about peace, and the establishment of a strong government."†

Afzul Khan died in October, 1867, and his brother, Azim Khan, "our friend," was recognised by our Government as Ameer, not only without a moment's hesitation or delay, but with a remarkable demonstration of renewed confidence. The *Punjaub Report* for 1867-8 states that "his succession was recognised by the British Government, *and in December the agent of the British Government, who had been hitherto detained at Peshawur pending the civil wars following on the death of Dost Mohammed*, again took up his residence at Cabul."‡

A belief has already been expressed that our Govern-

* *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, pp. 30, 31, 33.
† *Punjaub Report*, 1866-7, (printed at Lahore) par. 299, p. 95.
‡ *Ibid.*, 1867-8, par. 45, p. 14.

ment really supposed, when this letter of 11th July, 1866, was written, that they were holding the balance evenly between the contending parties. Credit may, perhaps, be claimed on their behalf—notwithstanding the natural purport of their words, which I have pointed out,—for not having intended to stir up more strife, or to encourage Afzul Khan to pursue the advantage he had gained, in order to supply us with a pretext for "breaking off the alliance" with Sher Ali Khan. So much credit may be freely given to them, but only on the ground originally taken up by me, that the whole letter breathes the spirit of partition. Sir John Lawrence's only idea of acting as peacemaker was that of suggesting an amicable division of territory among the rival brothers. The policy of his administration was that of looking on, and gently aiding, whenever a chance offered itself, in some such arrangement as that proposed in the following passage from the Calcutta pamphlet:—

"For ourselves it has been our opinion that the progress of the war might have been more than once averted by the partition of Afghanistan between two or more of the rival Chiefs, whilst the British Government assumed the position of the Paramount Power."*

This was a policy, in my humble opinion, neither upright, nor dignified, nor prudent. What our policy ought to have been, with due regard both for our own interests and for our treaty engagements with the Afghan State, seems plain enough.

We had formally recognised the Ameer as successor to his father, and, therefore,—under the Treaty of 1855, made with Dost Mohammed and "his heirs,"—as "Walee" (Ruler) "of Cabool and of those countries of Afghanistan now in his possession;" and we had bound ourselves "never to interfere in those territories."† So long, therefore, as any of those countries were in his possession, the British Government ought not to have recognised any other Ruler. That question ought never to have been raised by anything short of

* *Foreign Policy of Sir John Lawrence*, Calcutta, 1869, p. 11.
† Appendix A.

27124

his death or utter dispossession. It was not consistent with good faith towards the acknowledged head of a friendly State to aggravate its distractions or to aid in its dismemberment. Such a course was equally inconsistent with an enlightened regard for our Imperial interests. Such a course was, however, adopted by the British authorities in India.

During the long struggle of four years and a half, Sher Ali Khan sued frequently, but in vain, for assistance or support, in any shape, from the British Government. Setting aside for the moment all consideration of his right and of our recognition, it ought to have been as clear as day, at a very early period in the contest, that the Ameer was fighting our battles, that his cause was more popular than that of his rivals in all the Provinces of Afghanistan, and that he alone could hold the country as a compact State.

At almost every important crisis in the civil war, even after their most signal successes, Sher Ali Khan's opponents made overtures to him for peace,—*i.e.* for a partition of territory,—but the Ameer firmly refused all terms except those of entire submission to his authority as Sovereign of all his father's dominions.* Even this significant fact could not open the eyes of our representatives at Calcutta.

The current newspaper *reports* unanimously testify to the prevailing unpopularity of Sher Ali Khan's opponents, and prove that their temporary and unstable ascendancy was solely due to the superior generalship in the field of Azim Khan and his nephew, Abd-oor-Rahman, and to the help which the latter received from his father-in-law, the Ameer of Bokhara.† All this is pretty well epitomised in the recently published Calcutta pamphlet, eulogising Sir John Lawrence's administration, evidently compiled from authentic sources, which we have already quoted. The writer thus describes the state of affairs while Afzul

* See *Allen's Indian Mail*, November 22nd, 1866, and *Punjaub Administration Report*, for 1866-7, par. 297, p. 95.

† *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, pp. 21, 22.

ASIA

Khan was in power at Cabul, between June, 1866, and October, 1867:—

"Meantime the grossest oppression characterised the new administration. Money was required, and little scruple was displayed in wringing it out of the people of Cabul. Caravans were stopped and plundered until trade was virtually at an end; and loans and contributions were exacted. At the same time, disaffection at Cabul was put down with a high hand by Mahomed Azim Khan."

"The oppressed people of Cabul now began to yearn for the return of Shere Ali Khan from Candahar, in the hope that he would redress their wrongs."*

The *Edinburgh* Reviewer, speaking of the same period, says:—"All power centred in the hands of Azim Khan, who ruled with a tight hand, feared by many and loved by none."†

And referring to the period between October, 1867, and August, 1868, when Azim Khan, recognised as Ameer by our Government on the death of his brother Afzul Khan, held possession of Cabul, the Calcutta writer says:—

"While Shere Ali Khan was compelled to fly to Herat, his cause was popular with the Chiefs of Balkh."

"In March 1868, Shere Ali Khan completed his preparations at Herat for a renewal of the war. The new Ameer" (Azim Khan) "was most unpopular at Cabul and Candahar."‡

And the *Edinburgh* Reviewer tells us that when Afzul Khan had been installed at Cabul, after the signal defeat of Sher Ali Khan in May, 1866, the Ameer "made good his retreat upon Candahar," where "he was well received by the inhabitants." He adds:—"Half the Chiefs in Cabul continued in secret correspondence with him."§

The writer of the Calcutta pamphlet again, speaking of the great victory of Azim Khan over the Ameer Sher Ali in January, 1867, known as the battle of Khelat-i-Ghilzye, says:—

"The fortunes of Shere Ali Khan were now at their lowest ebb. But as yet he did not despair. He was still in possession

* *Foreign Policy of Sir John Lawrence*, Calcutta, 1869, p. 8.
† *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 31.
‡ *Foreign Policy of Sir John Lawrence*, Calcutta, 1869, p. 10.
§ *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 30.

of Herat; and an army in Balkh, under Faiz Mahomed Khan, had declared in his favour."*

Surely our Government must have been fully informed of these remarkable phenomena: surely they ought to have been able to interpret their meaning. Above all, they ought not to have overlooked the force of one most important fact, that in the midst of all his difficulties Sher Ali Khan never lost Herat, and, except for a few months, maintained his hold upon Balkh. Throughout the contest, his resources in men and money were chiefly recruited in these Provinces.

For more than forty years Herat had been separated from Cabul, until regained by Dost Mohammed. Herat, as an isolated Principality, would always lie at the mercy of some greater Power. All the treaties in existence could not prevent the city of Herat—rightly called "the Key of India,"—with more or less of the surrounding districts, from being annexed to Persia, with or without Russian help, at the first convenient provocation, if Great Britain were hindered by other immediate difficulties from employing effectual measures of direct resistance or coercion. If Herat were once fairly incorporated with the Persian monarchy, and a Russian Consulate established there, it would not be so easy to detach it again as it might have been to defend it.

The town of Balkh, now called Tukhtapool, is not twenty-five miles from the river Oxus, navigated by Russian steamers, and hardly two hundred miles from the new Russian cantonment of Charjooee. The Province, from the year 1820 until it was reconquered by Dost Mohammed in 1850, formed part of the Kingdom of Bokhara. The Ameer of Bokhara is now a vassal of Russia. If Balkh were a petty Principality, independent of Cabul, or if it formed part of a distracted and divided Afghanistan, the pretensions of Bokhara to its former dependency would very soon be revived.

It is only as constituent Provinces of a strong Afghan State, with its chief resources at Cabul and Candahar, that Balkh and Herat can be preserved intact from

* *Foreign Policy of Sir John Lawrence*, pp. 8, 9.

the encroachments and aggressions of their neighbours. It is only while their political connection with Cabul and Candahar continues, that Great Britain can exert its influence, for protection or tutelage, over those outworks of its Indian Empire. It is only by virtue of the Treaty of 1855 with the Ameer Dost Mohammed Khan and his "heirs," that Great Britain has any diplomatic intercourse or reciprocal engagements with the Walee or Ruler of Cabul. Under this Treaty there was to be "perpetual peace and friendship" between the British Government and the Walee of Cabul; and the latter undertook "to be the friend of the friends and the enemy of the enemies" of the former.*

Though so many important steps had been taken between 1855 and 1863 towards fully realising our main object of a strong and united Afghanistan, amenable to British influence,—Dost Mohammed having reduced the more distant provinces of Balkh and Herat to obedience; Lords Dalhousie and Canning having established relations of defensive and offensive alliance with the Walee of Cabul,—the Government of Sir John Lawrence, between 1864 and 1869, would have thrown these great advantages to the winds. At the supreme crisis of the civil war, when both parties had appealed for our recognition, the Government of India positively suggested and encouraged a re-partition of the State, that would have broken up destroyed British influence, that would have broken up Afghanistan into several petty Principalities, each one powerless by itself, at enmity with the others, and sooner or later dependent for mere existence on the patronage of our busy competitors.

Sher Ali Khan himself has saved us for the time from utter discomfiture, from a miserable retrogression. Alone he did it. If the Afghan Provinces are still united, as he received them from the wise and vigorous rule of his father, if British influence in Central Asia still subsists at all, if the clue of our Imperial policy, though dropped, can still be recovered, no servant of Great Britain, at home or abroad, appears to deserve any credit whatever for this

* Appendix A.

precious and fortunate reprieve. We owe it to Sher Ali Khan.

Before his second installation at Cabul in September 1868, and the decisive victory near Ghuznee over the forces of his brother, Azim Khan, in December of that year, the Ameer Sher Ali owed us nothing. Then our Government, roused at last to some sense of its lost opportunies, offered him some little assistance in money and warlike stores. He owed us nothing up to the date of that offer. On the contrary, but for our ambiguous behaviour, the intrigues and insurrections of his brothers—if they had ever been set on foot—would have been much less formidable.

The delay in recognising Sher Ali Khan's accession may be charitably imputed by some people, though not by me, to an oversight or mishap. Short as was the delay in recognising Afzul Khan, it was yet a deliberate act on the part of our Government. We incited the Ameer's rivals by delaying to recognise his title, and we recognised his rivals without any title at all.

Those who were allowed to guide Imperial affairs at Calcutta, and whose advice was trusted in London, between 1864 and 1869, failed utterly to master the situation. To take the best view of their policy, it was no policy at all, but mere bewilderment,—as if they had decided to look on, and see who would win. To take the worst view of it,—and one, I believe, nearer the truth,—it was a policy hostile to Sher Ali, but covertly hostile,—at first inclined towards Azim Khan, "our friend," as a candidate; more decidedly afterwards, in favour of partition.

A glimpse at the foregone conclusions on this point may be obtained from vol. ii of the *Collection of Treaties*, compiled by Mr. C. U. Aitchison, Under Secretary of the Foreign Department, and published at Calcutta by authority in January, 1863, six months before Dost Mohammed's death, while Colonel (now Sir Henry) Durand was Secretary to Government. We read as follows in the preliminary remarks to the Treaties with Afghanistan:—

"The recent invasion of the Cabul dominions from Herat, resulting in the siege of that town by the Ameer, has excited much speculation as to the future of Cabul. *There seems little doubt that the Kingdom is only kept from dismemberment by the personal influence of the Ameer,* who is now of great age."*

"Thy wish was father, Harry, to that thought."

There would have been no danger of "dismemberment," if the British Government had known how to do its duty to itself and to its neighbour, and had determined to do it,—if it had encouraged the reign of Law, instead of relying upon "personal influence." But petty counsels prevailed at the most critical moment. Imperial traditions were forgotten; the professional policy of Calcutta came into play unchecked. Good faith and good will towards the slowly forming State of Afghanistan were wanting, because the lawful Ruler was understood to have a will of his own. Without avowing our preference, a negative support might be given to the pretender, whose personal influence was imagined to be favourable to us, by simply withholding for a time our recognition of the regular succession. Sir John Lawrence, though not responsible for this first error, did nothing to rectify it. On the contrary, he recognised the first pretender who contrived to seize on the capital, and thus converted the negative support of disorder and confusion into positive support.

The official apology in the *Edinburgh Review*, was written about the end of 1866, when symptoms of the Calcutta policy having broken down were beginning to raise unpleasant remarks. The false information and false inferences on which it was founded were exploding in all directions. The Ameer Sher Ali was proving himself to be neither so weak nor so unpopular as he had been represented. Afzul Khan, recognised in July as Walee of Cabul, was not getting on at all. In six months he had made no progress, notwithstanding the Viceroy's exhortations, in "*consolidating his power in Cabul*," or in driving Sher Ali Khan from "*a large portion of Afghanistan.*" The British Government was still unable to "*break off its alliance with Ameer Sher Ali Khan, who had given it no offence.*"† The Reviewer writes:—

* *Collection of Treaties*, vol. ii, p. 427. † *Ante*, p. 17.

"At Cabul nothing of any importance occurred after the installation of the rival Ameer, Afzul Khan. But the prospects of the party have sensibly deteriorated in the interval. They hold nothing now but Cabul and Ghuznee.*

To make out a good story for Sir John Lawrence's Government, under these circumstances, was no easy matter. The Reviewer has done his best. He evidently anticipated the ultimate success of the Ameer's cause, and is dimly conscious of the worst point in the case,—the hasty recognition of Afzul Khan. Carried away, however, by loyal admiration for the distinguished person whom he has undertaken to defend, and by natural solicitude for the credit of his own Department, he takes the bull by the horns, declares that the British Government has been faithful to Sher Ali, and "*has given no countenance*" to Afzul Khan. He speaks of "the pertinacious efforts of Azim Khan to lure us from *our fidelity to the Ameer Sher Ali's cause.*" He assures us that "the relations of the Ameer Sher Ali remain on the old footing of mutual trust and good-will."† He characterises the Viceroy's letter of the 11th of July, 1866, as "the frank avowal of a preference for the Ameer Sher Ali."‡ "Above all," he says, "the reputation of being the ally of the British Government was a tower of strength" to Sher Ali Khan—

"For though, since the commencement of the strife, innumerable proofs have been given of our determination to let the Afghans fight out their own battles without the grant of a single musket or rupee to one side or the other, Sir John Lawrence has taken no less pains to let it be known throughout the length and breadth of Afghanistan that England does not depart lightly from her engagements, *and that no pretender can hope for any countenance from her, so long as the Prince whom she has once recognised as Sovereign retains any material hold upon the country.*"§

He protests in vain: his own scrupulously accurate narrative, and the Viceroy's letter, contradict him.

In order to maintain our condemnation of the policy pursued at Calcutta in 1864 and 1866, it is not at all necessary to insist that the Ameer ought to have been supplied at first with muskets or rupees. If the moral

* *Edinburgh Review*, Jan. 1867, p. 31.
† *Ibid.*, p. 31. See Appendix B. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 34.
§ *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 31.

support that was due to a friendly Sovereign had been extended to Sher Ali at the outset of his troubles, if no countenance had been given to the pretenders, Afzul and Azim Khan, the material help that seems to all India and Central Asia to have been at last extorted from us, would probably have never been required. Money is the great want of the Afghan State. Everyone, great and small, in that poor country, knew what effective aid we could give to its lawful Ruler, without moving a single battalion,—such as we had given to Dost Mohammed in 1857, such as we have now given, at the eleventh hour, to Sher Ali Khan. If the British Viceroy had taken his stand on the line and rule of succession instituted by Dost Mohammed, approved by our Government, and recorded in the Treaty of 1855, —if he had declared that he would deal with no one but the Ameer Sher Ali, on the ground of his absolute right, and had taken suitable means to make this declaration public, it would have found its way to the heart and reason of all Afghanistan. Conspiracy and rivalry would have been paralysed. A few firm and generous words would have done the work of armies.

Nor let anyone cavil at my use of the term "absolute right." It would, indeed, be hypocrisy for us to assert the divine right of Kings. It would, on the other hand, be useless pedantry for the most advanced Liberal among us to preach popular rights in the East. I uphold the absolute right of Sher Ali Khan under his father's nomination, simply as the germ of a law of succession, as something that ought to have been upheld until it could be replaced. The word "right" expresses ideas that are understood by the people of Afghanistan; it represents to them both a moral truth and a legal principle. They may attach more importance to the patriarchal investiture of Sher Ali Khan with the turban of sovereignty by his dying father's hands, in the presence of all his brothers, as a fact of sacramental efficacy, than to the peaceful transmisssion of power, as a political object; but they are not incapable of comprehending the latter idea, if judiciously pressed on their notice in combination with the former. It was a lesson they were ready to learn.

This was a golden opportunity for a great civilised Power, aspiring to the leadership of Asia, at once to promote peace and order, and to strengthen its own moral influence. We had not been blameless towards Afghanistan, and might now have made some reparation. The country had been torn and ravaged with disputed successions for more than fifty years. We might have crushed another in the egg. Instead of doing so, we fomented and fostered it.

Two practical lessons appear to be taught by the signal failure of our policy under Sir John Lawrence's Viceroyalty—first, that however much the administration of all India may be controlled in Calcutta, the Empire must be governed in London; secondly, that an eminent public functionary is not necessarily a great statesman. All the probabilities, precedents and presumptions are against him. A life passed in mastering and checking executive details, on however grand a scale,—a career, however distinguished, in every successive rank of an official hierarchy,—offers the worst possible introduction to the Viceregal chair of state. The most able and experienced member of our permanent Civil Service would hardly shine as Prime Minister.

In purely Imperial matters we must do our statesmanship at home, and our plans must be constructed on British principles. We must beware of official experts. Respect their achievements; chronicle their information; distrust their conclusions. These are too frequently dictated by the generous restlessness of special and singular qualifications, by a noble ardour for work and glory. The measures they recommend, whether of masterly interference or of masterly inaction, are too often tainted, also, by a certain touch of contempt and antipathy for the alien races whom they may affect so deeply, to which we are less liable in the latitude of London.

Even as far back as 1838, we should never have thought, on any calculation of profit or security for ourselves, of forcing a twice expelled King upon the most insignificant State of Europe. Nor would Lord Palmerston and Sir John Hobhouse have directed such an enterprise against Afghanistan, unless it had been previously devised and

concocted in Calcutta, unless they had been assured by the Indian Executive of its advisability and practicability. The Court of Directors might, indeed, most reasonably complain that they were not consulted as to the invasion of 1839, and declare that they totally disapproved of it. The East India Company may be fully absolved; but the Indian Government, who planned the expedition, and the Indian Services, who hailed it with enthusiasm, cannot escape their share of the blame.

Lord Auckland, the Governor-General of those days, not a very strong man at his best, had been three years in India, and was completely subject to the influence of three clever Bengal Civilians, the Foreign Secretary and his Assistant, and his own Private Secretary.*

There is so much danger of even the best possible Viceroy succumbing more or less to the official atmosphere amidst which he lives and works, that far from giving him credit for greater experience, the Imperial Government ought to tighten its vigilant supervision and control, rather than relax them, after every additional year of Viceregal residence in India.

During the last five years our dealings with Afghanistan have grievously damaged that country, and have placed our Government in a position of great disadvantage and discredit before all India and Central Asia. Our traditional policy of promoting a strong, orderly, and friendly Government over the united Provinces of Afghanistan, though occasionally talked about, was neglected in London and abandoned in India. Trusting for guidance to the officials of Calcutta, the Secretary of State could never see his way to any decided line of action. And so we drifted on, at the mercy of events. And although the worst consequences have been for the time averted by the persevering gallantry of the Ameer Sher Ali, and the popularity of his cause, the terms of our connection with the Afghan State were left on a very loose and makeshift footing.

It remains to be seen whether Lord Mayo has yet got beyond a makeshift. There has been no visible symptom of anything better at present. He certainly succeeded to

* *Kaye's War in Afghanistan*, 1857, vol. i, pp. 312, 315.

a pitiful political inheritance. At his Lordship's assumption of the Viceroyalty, the attitude of the Imperial Power of India towards Afghanistan,—so far as our past action indicated,—was something like this. Our successive projects of favouring "our friend," and of bringing about the partition of the country, having failed; Russia having utterly subdued Bokhara, and having advanced towards our frontier much more rapidly than we expected; Sher Ali Khan having proved more able and more popular than we had been led to believe,—showing himself capable of standing alone without us, or seeking aid elsewhere at his own discretion,—the British Government at last felt itself obliged to propitiate his good will by presents and by an annual subsidy during good behaviour.

Our statesmen must learn, in their treatment of Eastern affairs, to trust their own judgments and to believe in their own doctrines. We can offer no instruction or example to Oriental nations, if we lower our standard of political morals to their level. Whenever our Government, compromised or persuaded by its local representatives, has deviated, in its dealings with India, China, and other semi-civilised countries, from the international rules and maxims generally accepted in Europe, it has always made a blunder, and we have generally had to pay for it. Sooner or later, in one way or another, we shall have to pay for every one of these blunders.

The semi-official *Edinburgh Reviewer*, extolling the wisdom of "masterly inactivity," protests—very superfluously, I should imagine,—against "a re-occupation of all Afghanistan."* I can see no special military obstacles to a campaign in Afghanistan, with or without the Ameer's leave and concurrence, should any just provocation, hostile intrigue, or menacing movement from any quarter, render such a costly expedition advisable or unavoidable. Every year of friendly relations will diminish jealousies, dispel fears, and reduce the political difficulties of purely military operations in that country to the vanishing point. But the so-called peaceful occupation of any part of the country would be quite as costly as an openly-avowed

* *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 43.

campaign, and every year of it would only multiply and aggravate the sources of disgust and annoyance to the people of the country. There are defects in our mode of administration, as well as peculiarities in our manners and ways of life, of which the Afghans would be more impatient than the Hindoos have been, and which are yet a constant source of irritation in our longest-settled Indian Provinces. Besides, the Afghans have tried it already, and they did not like it.

I dismiss then at once all idea of securing our position in India, and spreading our influence in Afghanistan, by what has been called "the forward game,"—whether our advance were to be confined to putting garrisons into Quetta and other strategical points, or extended into more direct political domination, by the actual possession of certain districts. Both of these plans have been brought forward under distinguished auspices. It has been urged that by a very little pressure, or as an equivalent for a subsidy, the Ameer Sher Ali might be induced to consent to the introduction of our troops, and either to cede the fertile districts of Koorum and Khost, and perhaps Jellalabad, or to allow us to hold them as his tenants at an annual rent. The occupation of any point or part of Afghanistan, whether we entered by the Bolan or the Khyber Pass, would be an immense mistake. We assuredly should not sit still when we were there. The temptations to further encroachments and vexatious interference would be incessant and irresistible. In proportion to the extent of our territorial holding, and the efficacy of our management, the authority and dignity of the Ameer would suffer and decay, until he was either driven from the throne, or forced, as an act of self-preservation, to head an insurrection against us. Whichever form the crisis assumed, the British Government would be reduced to the alternative of either once more withdrawing from Afghanistan, or of attempting the responsibilities of conquest and sovereignty. In either case the prospect would be appalling.

And yet the urgent necessity for strengthening British influence in Afghanistan into an exclusive alliance and

virtual supremacy, becomes every day more evident. If we do not assume that position, another Power will do so before many years have passed. Whatever we may think of the policy towards Afghanistan pursued by our Government during the last five years, it is obvious that the policy of Russia in the adjacent regions has not failed. The *Edinburgh* Reviewer treated with some degree of incredulity the predicted subjugation of Bokhara, the occupation of Samarcand, and the establishment of a Russian cantonment at Charjooee.* Since that semi-official essay was published in January, 1867, all these events have come to pass. Even then the Reviewer hesitated to declare himself of that contented party of politicians who stigmatise what they call "Russophobia" as an "exploded fallacy," whose "vision of the future is that of the Cossack and the Sepoy lying down like lambs together on the banks of the Indus."† Yet he pronounces that, "with respect to Central India the Indian Government can do no wiser thing than fold its hands, and sit still."‡ Meanwhile the Russian Government has been stretching its legs, and moving onwards. The advance of Russia towards the frontier of India, steadily pursued for thirty years, has been slow but sure. If any one should ask me what the plans and objects of Russia are, I can only answer that I do not know, but I am quite certain she will not tell them to us, if we put the question to her. Nor do I believe that safety is to be sought in the "neutralisation" of Afghanistan, or in any other fruit of that "friendly understanding with Russia" that has been so much talked about. Neutralisation is nonsense. The neutrality of Switzerland is protected by the physical conformation of the country, by the free institutions and noble spirit of the people, and by their admirable military organisation. Belgium is forced in self-defence to keep up a very large army in proportion to her population; and neither her neutrality nor that of Luxemburg, in spite of all the treaties extant, would be respected by France or Prussia for a single day, if war should break out between them.

* *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, pp. 3, 41, 46.
† *Ibid.*, p. 44. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

There is still so much of weakness and instability in the footing which Russia has obtained in Central Asia, that any diplomatic overtures in this matter would probably be received with perfect complaisance, and met by the most friendly professions. She might be more polite, but hardly more pliable, than she was about Poland in 1863. As to her retiring one single step, or giving any more than verbal assurances on the subject of further expansion, it appears to me that it would be useless to expect any such concession, or to place the slightest reliance on any specious display of the sort with which it might suit her for the time to amuse us.* It is by no means necessary to assume that Russia has any designs distinctly and deliberately hostile to the British Empire. Perhaps she has no fixed design, because she can form no certain estimate of how much is feasible, and how soon, until she has tried. She may be patiently watching events, but she does not sit still with her hands folded. She goes on step by step, and secures every step she gains. One thing is certain,—she has not planted herself firmly on the Oxus, at a vast expense in men and money, for nothing. It is no very extravagant supposition to make, that she wants revenue to pay for her soldiers and establishments. And there is more revenue to be got on our side of the Oxus than on hers.

The commercial and political attractions and interests that have led Russia so far towards the frontier of India, are sufficiently obvious, natural and legitimate, without our seeking for any occult or malignant cause that particularly concerns ourselves. Still we have undoubtedly stood in Russia's way sometimes; and she may think it convenient to have constantly at her disposal some ready means to distract our attention, and divert our resources at any great European crisis. It is our own fault if we allow her to succeed.

The actual state of the chessboard, and the peculiar nature of the check that threatens us, are well indicated in a recent publication by one of our recognised national instructors, whose wide observation and keen discernment

* *Appendix* C.

are now, we may hope, applied towards the solution of some of those problems which he has defined so clearly. The following detached sentences from the Section on "Central India" in Mr. Grant Duff's *Political Survey*, do scanty justice to his lucid exposition, but they are sufficient for this particular point:—

"The position of affairs at this moment is then this,—Russia has got very considerable influence over Khiva, has incorporated with her own territory a large part of Khokand, and has Bokhara within her gripe.

"Come it slow, or come it fast, the end will come, and Russia will devour the whole of what we usually understand as Central Asia.

"When Russia is fairly established in Bokhara, she will come into necessary connexion with the little-known country which lies between Bokhara and those parts of Afghanistan with which we are familiar, and she will pass almost involuntarily within the domain of Indian politics. Already she is said to have a body of Afghans in her pay."*

A year has elapsed since that was written. Russia *is* "fairly established in Bokhara." She *has* passed "within the domain of Indian politics." It is now our business to counteract and nullify her obscure but growing influence on the spot from whence it spreads towards India.

To promote and facilitate trade and travel, to make our Northern frontier secure and inviolable, and to shut out from India a prolific source of wild hopes and injurious panics, there must be a strong and orderly Government in Afghanistan, exclusively subject to the British control. It must not be open to the Ameer Sher Ali, or to any future Ruler of that country, to intrigue or to negotiate with Persia or Russia, or with any of their dependents.

How is this constant and exclusive control to be exercised? The Ruler of Afghanistan is not at present in actual contact with the Imperial Power of India. He is not within our immediate reach, or exposed to direct coercion. Unless we decide on the formidable operation of forcing the Passes, we cannot get at him at all. But he will very soon be in actual contact with Russia,—if, indeed, he be not so already. The great Northern Power may not as yet feel her footing sure enough to decide on the next step; but when Bokhara has been reduced to unresisting

* *A Political Survey*, by M. E. Grant Duff, M.P., (1868) pp. 64, 65.

obedience, and its resources organised in subjection to Russian supremacy, a solid base will be provided for Southern expeditions. Whatever extent of nominal and ostensible sovereignty may be left to the Ameer of Bokhara, the Afghan State will then be only separated in fact from the Russian Empire by a river,—that river navigated by Russian steamers. The British Empire is separated from Afghanistan by tremendous chains of mountains,—every pass and valley occupied by hostile tribes inured to mountain warfare. Under these circumstances —should the relative situation remain unchanged,—it needs no prophetic insight to foretell which of the two Empires must wield a predominating influence over the poor and comparatively weak State interposed between them. No Afghan force could compete with Russian troops; and roubles will go as far as rupees. We had better not rely on the *Edinburgh* Reviewer's opinion that Russia "cannot afford to subsidise."*

How, then, is the relative situation to be changed? As it does not seem advisable that we should go to the Afghans, suppose we were to induce the Afghans to come to us. Instead of making a more distant frontier for ourselves beyond the Hills, suppose we were to make a nearer frontier for them on this side of the Hills. Anticipating the time,—not perhaps very distant,—when the Oxus will be the Russian boundary, suppose we were to make the Indus the British boundary. For our purposes a river is a better frontier than a chain of mountains.

We hold vast tracts of Afghan territory, much regretted by their former possessors, which are a heavy burden to us, but would be a precious boon to them. If our Government were to cede the District (rather, perhaps, the whole Division) of Peshawur, on certain conditions, and in lieu, or part payment, of a subsidy, to the Ameer Sher Ali Khan, we should make the most by the transaction. Besides the increase of revenue, he would acquire much dignity and authority by having regained for the Afghan people the lost fragments of the Dooranee Empire. The stronger he is, the greater his credit in the eyes of the Afghan nation, by virtue of our good offices, the better for

* *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 46.

us. Our profit, after having parted with Peshawur, would consist in the saving of subsidy and of our enormous establishments, and in the concentration of our military strength in formidable and disposable masses, though in smaller numbers, on a really stronger and more healthy line of frontier, instead of at least twenty thousand good troops* being frittered away in sixty or seventy forts and fortified posts, scattered along an undefinable frontier line of 800 miles, on the skirts of lofty mountain-chains. Even at Peshawur, where a force of about 3000 British soldiers, and as many Natives, with more than twenty field guns, are constantly stationed, we learn that a great fortress is to be constructed "*at a cost of upwards of half-a-million sterling*,"†—nearly five years' revenue of the whole Peshawur Division,—to protect "our magazines," and to afford "a place of refuge for non-combatants, women, and children." And then we are told of "hostile tribes and unruly neighbours." Surely this intelligence should strike us with a sense of humiliation. Who are these unruly neighbours, against whose attacks our magazines are to be protected in this expensive stronghold? The Afghans? Not the Afghans who are under the Government of the Ameer,—but "the hostile tribes" who are under no Government at all.

The following list of expeditions against the various Hill tribes along our border of 800 miles, since the annexation of the Punjaub in 1849, appears in a Parliamentary Return of 1864:—

Year.	*Tribe.*	*Troops.*	*Year.*	*Tribe.*	*Troops.*
1850	Afreedees	3,200	1853	Boree Afreedees	1,500
1851	Meeranzai	2,050	1854	Michnee Momunds	1,600
1852	Momunds	700	1855	Meerazai	3,700
1852	Ranizai	2,000	1855	Raobenkheyl, Orukzais	2,300
1852	Osmankheyl	2,000	1856	Meeranzai	4,550
1852	Kaghan	850	1857	Bozdar	2,640
1852	Omerzai Waziris	1,500	1858	Sitana fanatics	4,877
1852	Hussunzais	850	1858	Kabul kheyl Waziris	3,991
1853	Sheoranees	2,800	1861	Muhsood Waziris	5,196
1853	Kusranees	600	1863	Sitana fanatics‡	5,630

* I include in this rough estimate 9,000 Regular troops in the Peshawur District, 10,000 men of the Punjaub Irregular Force, and some thousands of Military Police, Horse and Foot.

† The *Times*, November 24th, 1868, Letter from Calcutta, dated October 27th.

‡ *Papers, East India*, (North West Frontier) No. 158, 1864, p. 139.

To make the calendar complete, three more recent expeditions must be added:—

1866	Afreedees - - -	6,000	1868	Sitana fanatics and Hussanzais - - -	20,000
1868	Bezotees - - -	1,000			

Twenty-three little wars in twenty years, besides innumerable blockades, embargoes, reprisals, and fines on Chieftains and Clans, enforced by military execution! There was another little excursion under Colonel Keyes against the Bezotees, on February 24th, 1869, hardly worthy of being ranked with the above, for our loss was only thirty-three killed and wounded.* And while these pages are in type, the mail that left Calcutta on the 27th of April, brings us the intelligence, quoted from the *Indian Daily News*, that "there has been another raid into British territory on the North West, and about 2,000 head of cattle appropriated." "A handful of troops have turned out," it adds, "and we shall soon hear of another dashing retribution. Of course, the raids are very annoying, but the splendid army on the Punjab frontier wants occupation, and these occasional expeditions are excellent discipline for our troops."† As some one said in the House of Commons regarding the Abyssinian expedition,—"it keeps our men in wind."

According to the official list there were 5630 men engaged in the expedition under General Sir Neville Chamberlain, against the Sitana fanatics in 1863, usually called the Umbeyla campaign. Yet from a previous paragraph in the same despatch we learn that when the Bonair tribes, who had become involved in the affray, at last gave in their submission, "our force was now in a position to do anything, *being more than* 9000 *strong.*"‡ Five British Regiments were included in this small but efficient army. In the campaign, from the 15th of October to the 16th of December, 1863, our casualties amounted to fifteen British officers killed, twenty-one wounded, and 847 killed and wounded of all ranks.§ If we consider this heavy loss, and observe the progressively increasing number of troops employed, until we find General A. Wilde at the head of

* Appendix D. † *Daily News*, May 24th, 1869.
‡ *Papers, North West Frontier*, 1864, p. 137. § *Ibid.*, p. 112.

20,000 men in 1868, this chronic little war seems gradually growing into a great one.

And what is the result of it all? What have we gained,—what has the cause of civilisation and progress gained,—by all this bloodshed, by all this lavish expenditure of money and munitions of war, by all this display of valour, military skill, and laborious energy? Of course our unruly neighbours are always in the wrong; they are hereditary brigands, and require periodical chastisement. This periodical chastisement, continued through twenty years, has worked no cure. These incorrigible marauders may well deserve to have their green valleys invaded, their villages burnt, their crops destroyed, and their fruit-trees cut down. The infliction of such punishment by a great, powerful, and enlightened nation may be a just and necessary act, but it ought to be effectual. There seems to be little glory and less profit, when the revenues of India and the blood of British soldiers are annually wasted in carrying out a penal process that is neither exemplary nor reformatory, from which we reap neither reparation for the past nor security for the future.

Everyone who has had any local experience repeats the same story, that our relations with the mountaineers are more embittered than ever. The slopes and valleys held by the border tribes, especially between the Khyber range and the Swat country, are becoming a sure asylum for desperate outlaws, political refugees, and religious fanatics, all hostile to the British Government. The turbulent population of this debateable land is now incessantly recruited, instructed and inflamed by criminals and adventurers from our own Provinces, subsidised, as has been clearly proved, by the Wahabees and other Mohammedan sects of Bengal and Hindostan.

In short, the state of our North-West frontier is utterly intolerable, and promises to become worse instead of better. No one holds out any hope of permanent improvement, or offers any plan for the pacification and settlement of the Hills, except that which amounts to the invasion and conquest of a part of Afghanistan, a bloody, tedious, and costly enterprise in itself, with endless complications and incalculable consequences.

Our frontier system has failed hitherto, and there is no prospect of its future success. The mountain barrier, through which all the commerce and correspondence between India and Afghanistan must pass, is in the possession of lawless freebooters, owning no ruler, recognising no interests, duties, or responsibilities beyond the limits of their own particular tribe. Even the Ameer Sher Ali Khan, before starting on his recent visit to Lord Mayo at Umballa, was obliged to negotiate with the Khyberees, to secure an unmolested route through their Pass, by a combination of threats and presents. The sovereignty of the Hills up to our frontier, (for the most part defined by the line of junction between hill and plain,) is nominally attributed to the Ruler of Afghanistan, but neither the Afghan nor the British Government can rule the mountain tribes, or command the Passes, because neither Government can, in military language, *invest them*. Thus, the entrance to the Khyber Pass on our side, marked by the fort of Jumrood, is in our possession; the exit, after a march of thirty miles, is fairly within the Afghan jurisdiction. The transit through these points lies through a natural fortress, which neither Government can surround or blockade. The road can only be made safe for a single journey by a military operation on a large scale.

There are many reasons to doubt whether the routes of communication could be kept open and undisturbed permanently, and the Hill tribes brought to order, by concerted action between the two Governments. The Ameer Sher Ali might agree to such stipulations in perfect good faith, though perhaps with some misgiving, and yet the desired object might prove as far off as ever. His interests in unrestricted commerce would not be so apparent,—not at least to him,—as ours are to us. While he was supposed by his own people and his own intimate advisers to be labouring for the benefit of British trade, he might find opposition rising at home; religious doubts and scruples might supervene, and the impending loss of power and popularity might cause his co-operation to slacken, without its being politic or even possible for him to make a candid confession of his difficulties. Even at the best,—

if harmony were outwardly preserved,—all the work and expense of the coalition would assuredly fall upon the British Government. The Ameer's obligations would be vague; the extent of his resources not easily measured. We should have no means of stimulating his languid efforts except by open war. If we became embroiled with our Ally, all that we had gained would be lost.

The situation would be very different if the Ameer Sher Ali were constituted Sovereign on both sides of the Hills. His right to claim the submission of the mountain tribes, lying between two parts of his Kingdom, the advantages of maintaining discipline among them, and of securing the free transit of goods and travellers through the Passes, would then be quite intelligible and indisputable; while his power to obtain these objects, with temporary aid, perhaps, from us, would soon be sufficiently manifest to make resistance hopeless. His duty and his interest would run in the same path. His responsibility to the British Government would be very clearly defined, and very easily enforced. The territorial aggrandisement of the Afghan State would place a material guaranty within our grasp for the constant observance of all our conditions. Instead of a tough and rugged hide, Afghanistan would now present a sensitive human skin to the hand of her tutor and physician. Intrigue at Herat or Balkh, scandalous oppression at Cabul, an outrage in the Passes, would be at once felt, and could be at once checked at Peshawur.

No support can be claimed for the policy suggested in these pages from Sir John Lawrence's proposal in June 1857 to withdraw our troops from Peshawur, and to present the District to the Ameer Dost Mohammed. I am withheld from pleading the great authority of Lord Lawrence on my side by two distinct considerations,—first, that the measure suggested in 1857 appears to me to have been inopportune and imperfect; secondly, that we are by no means justified in assuming that Lord Lawrence would approve the measure suggested in 1869.

We are hardly as yet in possession of sufficient materials for a final judgment, or even for a complete criticism, on Lord Lawrence's policy in Central Asian affairs. Enough has, perhaps, been adduced in these pages to prove that it was not adequately described in the demi-official article of the *Edinburgh Review* as a policy of "masterly inactivity." Nor was much light thrown upon the subject by the noble Lord's speech of the 19th of April. Notwithstanding the general tone of personal recollection and experience running through this interesting speech, we can find no thread of fixed principle or design binding together the events of the last fourteen years as therein recapitulated. Lord Lawrence reminds the House of Peers of the large share he took in these transactions, and virtually promises the present Viceroy a full measure of encouragement and support.

"I believe Lord Mayo has done no more than act on the principles I suggested; I believe there is no intention and no desire to do otherwise, but quite the contrary; and I believe it is the wish of the Government in India and of Lord Mayo to pursue a course strictly in accordance with that hitherto adopted."

But he says nothing to make the course hitherto adopted appear less crooked. He fills up none of the gaps; he mends none of the broken links. In speaking of the Treaty concluded with Dost Mohammed in 1854, he pays a grateful tribute to its real author.

"These overtures on the part of the late Ameer must be attributed to the wise and zealous exertions of the late Sir Herbert Edwardes, an officer of great mark, whose death was one of the greatest losses that could be inflicted on the Indian Service."

But he does not allude to the singular fact which we learn from Mr. Kaye, a very safe informant, that Sir John Lawrence, Chief Commissioner of the Punjab, objected to both the Treaties with Dost Mohammed, that of 1855 as well as that of 1857.* Nor does he say a word in explanation of that still more singular fact, his own proposal in June 1857 to cede Peshawur to that very Ameer Dost Mohammed, with whom in January he had objected to make a Treaty.

* *Kaye's Sepoy War*, vol. i.

The proposed cession of 1857 seems to have been based on no principle whatever, and to have provided for no future course of action; but to have been—as usual—a mere make-shift, calculated, as was supposed, to meet the immediate pressure. The siege of Delhi was then in that critical stage, when there was even some thought of raising it. Peshawur was therefore to be handed over as a peace-offering to Dost Mohammed, while the troops at Peshawur were to proceed to Lahore and join an army of reserve to reinforce the besieging force before Delhi.*

The combined remonstrances of General Sir Sydney Cotton, commanding the troops at Peshawur, Sir Herbert Edwardes, Commissioner of the Division, and General John Nicholson, Deputy Commissioner of the District, appear to have averted this retrograde step, which was also totally disapproved by Lord Canning. Various opinions may exist as to the relative advantages of holding Peshawur and of ceding it to the Ameer of Afghanistan. The same differences of opinion may exist as to the retention of Gibraltar or its restoration to the Spanish Government. But there are times and seasons. To have surrendered Peshawur to Dost Mohammed, while we were engaged in that life and death struggle, and while thirty thousand Afghans were saddling their horses for a raid on Hindostan, would have been as if we had given up Gibraltar to the Spaniards, while the French and Spanish fleets rode in Algesiras Bay, while the allied armies were in the lines of San Roque. It would have been a capitulation without terms. It would not have conciliated the Afghans or the border tribes; it would have united them against us, and would have destroyed the power of Dost Mohammed to restrain them. The Indus would not have stopped them, if they had once got through the Passes. They would have come upon us like a flood.

Supposing, however, that the cautious and moderate policy of Dost Mohammed had been proof against the temptation of our avowed weakness, and his injunctions had sufficed to keep the Afghans on their own side of the

* *Nine Years on the North West Frontier of India.* By General Sir Sydney Cotton, K.C.B. (Bentley, 1866), p. 190-197.

Indus, the actual danger might have been tided over, relief might have been given for the moment to our overstrained military resources, but no permanent gain would have been acquired, no permanent good would have been done. On the contrary, there would have been an absolute loss of power and a real desertion of duty. The aggressive spirit of the Afghans would have been gratified at our expense, and the very circumstances of the cession would have precluded conditions being imposed by our Government for the advancement of its legitimate influence and interests, and for the maintenance of an orderly administration in the transferred Province.

One fatal defect has hitherto possessed and poisoned all our communications with the Afghan State. To whatever extent, and in whatever direction, we have endeavoured to control its course, our aim has been always transparently selfish. To this it must be added that our method has been usually destructive. Our action has been so purely negative and superficial, that it has never produced, at the best, anything more than a superficial and negative effect in our favour. Too often it has recoiled against us.

Whether the British agents in India have adhered to our traditional policy of promoting the union and strength of the Afghan Kingdom, or whether they have departed from it, their vision has been always fixed on the outward aspect of affairs, and their object limited to some immediate exigency of our own. When we assisted Dost Mohammed with a subsidy and a supply of arms in 1857, that assistance was given because there was "*war between the British and Persian Governments,*" and was to be continued on certain conditions of active co-operation "*during the war with Persia.*"* When we delayed for six months the recognition of Ameer Sher Ali Khan, and promptly recognised two successive pretenders, it was—at least all India and Afghanistan believed it was,—because we supposed Azim Khan, the most able and energetic leader of the insurgents, to be "our friend," to be "more loyally disposed towards the British Government than any other Afghan Sirdar."†

* *Collection of Treaties*, vol. ii, p. 481. † *Ante*, p. 7.

In 1839, when we violently restored Shah Sujah; in 1863, when we superciliously ignored Sher Ali; in 1866 and 1867, when we recognised his rivals; and on several occasions during the civil war when we counselled and encouraged a partition of territory, we never evinced the slightest consideration for the wishes of the Afghans themselves, or any desire to ascertain what their wishes were. We bent ourselves to the inglorious task of setting up or abetting some *person*,—who, if ever so firmly seated, could not live for ever,—who was expected to be grateful, or "loyal," or manageable for our purposes. In every instance our project failed, as such petty makeshifts deserve and are destined always to fail. Our policy will assuredly fail again, sooner or later, if it rests on the expectation that the Ameer Sher Ali, in person, his heir apparent, or any of his successors, in person, will be "loyal," grateful, or manageable, on account of the assistance that has been given to him and to his branch of the family. We must not hope that the Ruler of Afghanistan can long be kept in the path of faithful alliance and orderly government, by means of an annual subsidy or occasional supplies of money and warlike stores. We must have something more solid than a personal basis for our policy.

Our statesmen ought fully to realise one great fact which Indian officials always seem to lose sight of, that Asiatics are men endowed with intellectual faculties very similar to our own, actuated by motives, passions, and ambitions, good and bad, very much like ours. It will not help us much towards a clear understanding of their wants and capabilities, through which we might win them to our purpose, and guide them into a better way, if we habituate ourselves to think of the Afghans only as "picturesque ruffians,"* or dwell exclusively upon what we call their "treachery" when struggling against foreign invaders. Let us rather look at the brighter points of their national character, recognise such evidence of moral and social progress as their recent annals present, and assure ourselves that they know far more about their own affairs, and are far more competent to manage them, than we have been

* *Edinburgh Review*, January 1867, p. 3.

hitherto disposed to allow. Let us be very kind to their virtues and successes, and not entirely blind to our own failings and failures. We shall then be in a better position to survey the present necessities, and to form a plan for our future conduct.

Were friendly and confidential relations fully in play, our example and instructions, through the personal agency and influence of two or three first-rate British officers, might do much for the good of the Afghan Government and people, without any approach to those contemptuous displacements and sweeping innovations that have characterised in general our political guidance of India. We must help our friends across the Indus to build on their own foundations.

It will thus be quite possible for us to extend the benefits of our superior knowledge and acquirements to a nation confessedly in a lower stage of civilisation, without conquest, without forcible intervention, not only without any expense, but with profit and advantage to ourselves. If every facility and encouragement be given to commerce, the mere experience of a mild rule and an orderly administration of justice on one side of the frontier, must in time tend to create a demand for similar institutions on the other side. Those who within the last quarter of a century have had opportunities of local observation and intercourse, may be of opinion that such rudiments of reform and improvement as are discernible in the doctrine and practice of the Afghan State, are due to our influence and example. There may be a great deal of truth in this, and we may well be proud of it. Moreover, it has been said that a decided change in the public opinion and political maxims of the country, may be traced to the reports and recollections of what was accomplished or attempted during our brief supervision of Shah Sujah's Government. This is very probable. Good often rises out of evil; and we may hope that the Afghans did really reap some permanent advantage from that iniquitous aggression. That in spite of all enmities and heart-burnings, a decided impression was left of some of our better qualities as men and as rulers, may well be believed. Of the great personal

influence exercised for good by certain British officers there can be no doubt at all. The name of Rawlinson, for instance, will never be forgot or unhonoured at Candahar. And yet in this direction, also, it is equally true that we must have something more solid than a personal basis for our policy in Afghanistan. We must put our trust neither in her Princes nor in our Paladins.

Such personal influence is not all in all; nor is it always to be had. Certainly I do not undervalue those distinguished men who have wrought out great results for their country's glory, and for the good of Eastern races, by their gallantry, their talents, and their devotion to duty. It is not I who undervalue them, but those who seem to think that the supply of such men is unlimited. I by no means believe that a Rawlinson or an Edwardes, a George Clerk or a Henry Lawrence can be picked up in every mess-room, or even in every competitive examination. Even if they could be found, they are not wanted in great numbers. The personal influence of exceptional men, from our own ranks, were they always at hand at the right moment, could never be all in all in our relations with the Eastern world. Their fine qualities and rare acquirements are rightly applicable for the advancement of our interests among Oriental nations, and for the benefit of those nations themselves, only with the predetermination that their action shall be temporary,—chiefly for military and diplomatic affairs, sometimes for efforts of organisation and settlement in critical emergencies.

When we are compelled to undertake the thorough reconstruction of a dependent State in India,—whether in conformity with the provisions of a Treaty, or simply on prudential grounds,—the act is revolutionary, and should be limited in extent and time to the positive necessities of the case. This is the work we were doing in Mysore, until the official propensities of Calcutta turned it into a field for patronage. This is the work we are doing with most beneficial effect in Bhawulpoor. This is the work we now have a noble opportunity of doing in the Nizam's Dominions, during the infancy of the reigning Prince. The establishment of a regular financial and judicial system in

a Native State, under the management of English officers, —should it unfortunately be necessary to employ more than one or two,—must never be the aim and end of our reforming operations. Our work will not be fairly done until we have replaced Native agency at the head of every department. Good administration is not identical with good government, so long as it can only be worked by foreigners, and maintained by military force.

The most urgent problem of Eastern statesmanship is how to reconcile self-government for India with Imperial supremacy for Great Britain. My doctrine is that the more we concede the former, the more we confirm the latter. Many who dispute, or would indefinitely defer, the applicability of this problem to Indian affairs, will admit it with reference to Afghanistan.

Peshawur is an Afghan Province. The Hills between Peshawur and the settled districts of Cabul can never be reduced to regular government by any one but an Afghan Sovereign. Whatever mythical account they may give of their origin, diverse as may be the names adopted by the clans, and frequent their feuds and factions, they all speak the Pushtoo or Afghan language, and are identified with the Afghans in religion, manners, and social economy. It would be the greatest mistake to suppose that the Hill country is irreducible, or that the Hill people are irreclaimable. Recent and authentic annals tell us, that considerable progress was made—doubtless in somewhat rough style,—towards the settlement and subjugation of these unruly tribes during the prosperous days of the Dooranee Empire,—under a Government which held both sides of the mountain ranges. The nearest approach to good order and an open thoroughfare in the Hill regions from time immemorial, seems to have been made in the reign of the great Ahmed Shah, founder of the Suddozye dynasty, between 1746 and 1773. His son, Timoor Shah, resided a great deal at Peshawur; and it was there that the ill-fated Shah Sujah in 1809 received with splendid courtesy the memorable British mission conducted by Mountstuart Elphinstone. During the confusion caused by the civil wars of Afghanistan and the conquests of Runjeet Sing,

who began by making the Chieftains of Peshawur, Dost Mohammed's brothers, his tributaries in 1823, the Hill tribes fully resumed their predatory independence. Since that period all their worst propensities and ancestral malpractices, have been revived and stimulated by political circumstances on both sides of their mountain home. Religious animosity and a rude feeling of patriotism, kept them incessantly on the alert, first against the Sikh rulers of the Punjaub, and afterwards against their successors, ourselves. Internal dissensions, continued for more than thirty years, including the period of British occupation, made the Afghan Government weak, while the loss of Peshawur destroyed at once its resources and its inducements to control the mountaineers. A strong Afghan Kingdom, on good terms with our Government, would find those resources restored and those inducements redoubled, by the peaceful possession of the Peshawur Province. With a friendly and civilised Government like ours in the Punjaub, able to afford effectual assistance, and to prescribe an enlightened and humane method of procedure, the good work could be speedily consummated, without any danger of failure or relapse.

The possibility of leading these turbulent communities to abandon their wild habits, to become peaceful cultivators and regular tax-payers, has been sufficiently proved by the successful transformations of that sort effected in the several Districts of our North Western frontier. These are the truest and brightest triumphs of Sir John Lawrence's administration of the Punjaub. Some interesting *Notes on Bunnoo*, (the most northerly part of the Derajāt, immediately adjoining the Kohat District of the Peshawur Division*) by Major H. B. Urmston, Deputy Commissioner, written in 1866, printed early in 1869 at the Government Press, Lahore, may be usefully quoted on this subject. For what has been done in this District, recently under his own charge, Major Urmston gives the highest credit, as was due, to those distinguished officers who first

* *Notes on the Bunnoo District*, (*Selections from the Records of the Punjaub Government*, No. I,) by Major H. B. Urmston, Deputy Commissioner, Government Press, Lahore, 1869.

ruled in Bunnoo,—Herbert Edwardes, during our guardianship of the Maharajah Dhuleep Sing, John Nicholson, and Reynell Taylor since the annexation, of whom the last mentioned alone is living.

"Eighteen years have now passed away since Sir Herbert (then Lieutenant Edwardes, Assistant to the Resident at Lahore,) in the name of the Sikh Government, took possession of the country, and laid the foundations of the fort of Dhuleepghur. Many of the leading characters described with so much life in his book, (*A Year on the Punjaub Frontier*) have disappeared from the scene; some are still living who delight to speak of the first English ruler; while the younger branches, now well advanced in manhood, have not forgotten those early days when their fathers were called upon to level their 400 forts, and bend their necks for the first time to the yoke of the Feringhee Hakim. Nor have sixteen years of peaceful rule been unmarked by progress; many a bloodstained sword and dagger has been converted into a ploughshare,—many a fighting 'goondee,' or faction, into loyal and obedient agriculturists. True—the 'goondees' do still exist to a certain extent. They will not, perhaps, ever become wholly extinct; but their quarrels are now quietly referred to the Courts of Justice, instead of, as in olden times, to the force of arms. This of itself is one great stride in civilisation,—a sure sign of a strong and settled Government. Indeed, it is impossible to mix with the people, or talk with the old grey-beards of a village, without being struck by their opinion of the revolution caused by British rule and British laws. One and all acknowledge the blessings,—political and social,—which have been conferred.

"These benefits are manifest in marked increase of value given to property, improved appearance and condition of the people, and their appreciation of rights in the soil. Land previously fallow for many generations has, within the present decade, been brought under cultivation to the extent of many thousand acres, which were, till recently, covered with jungle, infested by wild beasts and highway robbers."*

It may be asked whether we are justified in risking the continued existence of these remarkable reforms, by transferring British territory and British subjects to the tender mercies of an Eastern despot. Such a policy may be denounced as an abdication of power, and an abandonment of duty. It is not an abdication of power. The Kingdom of Afghanistan is thereby drawn from a remote and

* See Map.

unapproachable seclusion into direct contact and intimate association with the Imperial Government of India. With judicious management, the result cannot be doubtful. It is not an abandonment, but a fulfilment of duty. The Ruler of Afghanistan is thereby led from Eastern despotism towards a Sovereignty of law and order. The plant of progress which is exotic and precarious under foreign nursing, is acclimatised and made hardy when trusted to native cultivation.

Of course the Ameer would not be placed in possession of the Peshawur Division or any part of it, without ample securities for the maintenance of good government, religious toleration and equality before the law of all sects and races, as at present established. Those who have felt and enjoyed those blessings, will not be inclined to give them up; and it may be hoped that a short experience by Prince and people of their advantages on *this* side, would soon carry them over to the other side of the Hills, no longer a barrier between separate jurisdictions. The greater freedom and frequency of intercourse and commerce between the two sections of the Afghan State, and between the Afghan State and British India, the force conferred on British counsels, the facilities acquired for British instruction and guidance, must all work towards the same goal, the absolute predominance of British influence in the regions between the Oxus and the Indus.

APPENDIX.

(A.)

Treaty between the British Government and His Highness Ameer Dost Mahomed Khan, Walee of Cabul and of those Countries of Afghanistan now in his possession, concluded on the part of the British Government by John Lawrence, Esquire, Chief Commissioner of the Punjab, in virtue of full powers vested in him by the Most Noble James Andrew, Marquis of Dalhousie, K.T., etc., Governor General of India, and on the part of the Ameer of Cabul, Dost Mahomed Khan, by Sirdar Gholam Hyder Khan, in virtue of full authority granted to him by His Highness.

ARTICLE 1ST.

Between the Honourable East India Company and His Highness Ameer Dost Mahomed Khan, Walee of Cabul and of those Countries of Afghanistan now in his possession, and the heirs of the said Ameer, there shall be perpetual peace and friendship.

ARTICLE 2ND.

The Honourable East India Company engages to respect those Territories of Afghanistan now in His Highness' possession, and never to interfere therein.

ARTICLE 3RD.

His Highness Ameer Dost Mahomed Khan, Walee of Cabul and of those Countries of Afghanistan now in his possession, engages on his own part, and on the part of his heirs, to respect the Territories of the Honourable East India Company, and never to interfere therein; and to be the friend of the friends and enemy of the enemies of the Honourable East India Company.

Done at Peshawur this Thirteenth day of March, One thousand Eight hundred and Fifty-five, corresponding with the

Eleventh day of Rujjub, One thousand Two hundred and Seventy-one Hijree.

(Signed) JOHN LAWRENCE,
Chief Commissioner of the Punjab.

(Signed) GHOLAM HYDER,
Heir Apparent,
As the Representative of Ameer Dost Mahomed Khan and in person on his own account as Heir Apparent.

Ratified by the Most Noble the Governor General at Ootacamund, this First day of May, One thousand Eight hundred and Fifty-five.

(Signed) DALHOUSIE.

By order of the Most Noble the Governor General,
(Signed) G. F. EDMONSTONE,
Secretary to the Government of India,
With the Governor General.

(B.)

"THE OLD FOOTING OF TRUST AND GOOD WILL."

(*Page* 28.)

Lord Mayo's reception of the Ameer Sher Ali at Umballa, and the subsequent negotiations at that place in April 1869, may have brought about a better understanding, but the following extract from the letter of a well-informed observer will suggest, perhaps, a doubt whether the *Edinburgh* Reviewer did not rather anticipate matters, when he wrote of "*trust and good will*" in 1866.

"It is said that the negotiations were not carried to their present satisfactory conclusion without some difficulty. Everything has, however, at last terminated well, and the Ameer, *who was at first very distrustful of British policy*, will go away pleased with his visit and satisfied of our sincerity. He says he intends to make no secret of the agreement between himself and us. 'I hate paper work,' he said, 'and secret diplomacy. I like a clear, plain policy. I shall announce what has been agreed upon, for I am not going to give grounds for suspicions that there are two treaties, one secret, the other public.' *I have observed that he distrusted us at first and made no secret of his feeling.* To one official he said: '*The British Government is responsible for the bloodshed of the last three years.*' To another, who begged him to speak

out his wishes and intentions in order that the British Government might know how to frame its policy, he rejoined sharply, 'What is the policy of the British Government?'"*

(C.)

RUSSIA IN CENTRAL ASIA.

(*Page* 35.)

Mr. Gladstone's remarks in the House of Commons on the 8th of April, concerning the exchange of opinions between the British and Russian Governments on the state of Central Asia, with reference to the proposed motion on that subject by Mr. E. B. Eastwick, Member for Penryn, are thus animadverted upon in the *Moscow Gazette*:—

"What we have foreseen for a couple of months has come to pass. England and Russia have entered upon 'a negotiation of a most friendly and satisfactory character' respecting Asiatic affairs. It is not very intelligible, though, why Mr. Gladstone, in letting Parliament into the secret, should have thought it necessary to confine his disclosures to the few words we have just quoted. Ordinarily, it is only in the case of difficult negotiations, or when war and peace are at issue, that British Ministers deem it incumbent upon them to give evasive answers to questions of a diplomatic nature put to them in Parliament. Neither being the case in the present instance, we are at a loss to divine why greater communicativeness on the part of the Minister might, as he said, interfere with the satisfactory progress of the affair. What progress? What affair? Probably the British Government have reasons of their own for wishing to prevent the matter being discussed by the representatives of the country. However that may be, the press, not being fettered by diplomatic considerations, ought to sift this particular subject all the more carefully. Opinions enunciated by independent papers, though not binding upon Governments, may yet serve to throw considerable light upon the subject under discussion, and had better be published while as yet it is not too late to influence the decisions to be arrived at. We have watched the English press since it first began to speak of the necessity of effecting some arrangement between Russia and England touching Central Asia. Among the expedients proposed by the English papers, there was one suggesting that Afghanistan should be converted into a neutral State on the Belgian pattern, and the adjoining Khanates be included in the privileges of European national law. But we cannot bring ourselves to believe that

* Letter from Umballa, April 4th, *Homeward Mail*, May 3rd, 1869.

English politicians should have really hit upon the device of making us engage not to extend our frontiers beyond a certain point, or not to do such and such things in our relations with the Khanates. There is too much political good sense in England to make them adopt a basis of negotiation which could not produce any practical results. Our suppositions in regard to this are strengthened by the circumstance that England has hastened to secure, without foreign concurrence, the neutrality of Afghanistan, or rather the goodwill of the Afghans for herself. After a long interval, in which England contented herself with the part of a vigilant observer, she has recently paid subsidies to Sher Ali, and recognised him as the legitimate Ruler of Afghanistan. Quite recently this newly-made potentate has been received with much theatrical display by the Governor-General of India, and, it is rumoured, been promised an annual salary of £120,000. Thus England is endeavouring to place herself on good terms with the Ameer of Afghanistan; and if Russia is obliged to let her do as she pleases, England in turn must be content with our treating the Ameer of Bokhara as we please. A political agreement being, then, entirely out of the question, the negotiations alluded to by Mr. Gladstone can have reference only to commercial interests. Our commercial stake in Central Asia is quite as important to us as our political; and if Mr. Gladstone is right in expressing himself with so much complacency upon the attitude assumed by our Government in their confidential palavers with him, it is but too probable that what he regards as satisfactory will not be equally so to our mercantile community. As to the wish of the English papers to see Consuls installed in Turkistan, and Russian Consuls in India, we cannot ourselves see the good it would do. We have no direct commerce with India. There are neither Russian factories nor Russian subjects to be found in the country. Why, then, should we burden our Budget with the salaries of superfluous representatives? And why, indeed, should England wish to station a Consul at Tashkent? Would not his only occupation consist in watching the action of our Government, and is he, perhaps, to intrigue with the Natives and to arm them against us? But recently M. Vambéry, in a letter to the *Times*, advised the English to send Consuls to the towns of Central Asia. M. Vambéry is the implacable enemy of Russia, and counsels vouchsafed by him ought to serve as a timely warning to ourselves. Only extreme necessity has forced us to extend our Asiatic frontier further South. We believe we have a right to expect some reward for the sacrifices made on that occasion, and, if our hopes are fulfilled, shall not only retain possession of the vast market of Turkistan, but through it gain access to Chinese Tartary, a country unapproachable from every other side. It is but natural that the English

should try to throw impediments in our way in that direction. In conclusion, we cannot but repeat the opinion expressed by us on a former occasion, that in the event of an Eastern war Turkistan will be a formidable basis of operations for us against the English. If, however, we are let alone by the English, and our interests are not interfered with, we have certainly no cause to menace their Indian Empire."

In a similar strain, but in much more violent language, is composed an article in the St. Petersburg *Goloss*. According to this, the more advanced organ of the National party—"The commercial war already being waged between England and Russia, on the Northern frontiers of Afghanistan, is not at all unlikely to give way some day to a combat with more sanguinary weapons than weights and measures. In this case, the rifles presented to the Ameer by the Earl of Mayo would stand him in good stead, though, for the matter of that, the Ameer, after taking pounds sterling, is quite as likely as not to try roubles for a change."

A Berlin Correspondent of the *Times* remarks on the above:—"I believe I am right in saying that the spirit manifested in these words pervades nearly all Russian utterances on the subject, much as the language used by the individual papers may vary. If an inference can be drawn from the attitude of the press and the tone of Russian society as to the policy likely to be pursued by the St. Petersburg Cabinet, it is not improbable that an attempt will be made to benefit by the advice contained in the concluding passage of the *Moscow Gazette*."

(D.)

RECENT HILL EXPEDITIONS.

(*Page* 39.)

"In order somewhat to facilitate Colonel Keyes' incursion into the Bezootee country from Kohat, a strong demonstration was contemporaneously made from the Peshawur side. Successful as Colonel Keyes' inroad on the Bezootees" (on February 24th, 1869) "was, it is hardly to be correctly described as a surprise. The chastisement was actually given to a village for which it was not intended. It was intended for Dana Khoola, but fell upon Gara. The Mullicks of the so-called "friendly Bezootees" who accompanied the party, had assured Captain Cavagnari and Colonel Keyes that no opposition was to be apprehended from the people of Gara, which is the first village within the natural fortress of the Ooblun. As the force approached Gara the Mullicks were sent ahead to warn the inhabitants that no harm would be done them unless provoked by their own conduct. Nevertheless, when Colonel Keyes came up he found the villagers busy removing their cattle and

families, and the force had no sooner got within range than some shots were fired at it. The village was then attacked and carried at once. A considerable number of the enemy were killed on the spot—Captain Cavagnari shooting two with his own hand—and the entire village destroyed, the grain burnt, and all the live-stock carried off. As the fugitives from Gara had taken the direction of Dana Khoola, there was clearly no chance of surprising the latter place, and accordingly the detachment returned, having inflicted probably ten times as much loss as it suffered, and, above all, having "lifted the *purdah*" (the veil) of the Ooblun, the virgin fortress whose strength and inaccessibility had defied Coke and his successors, and been confidently vaunted all over the Hills as a nut that would always be too hard for British cracking."*

In this chastisement and destruction of a village, "for which it was not intended," our loss was thirty-three killed and wounded. In *Allen's Indian Mail* of April 5th, 1869, the general opinion is said to be that the expedition was inconclusive, and that the Bezotees "have not learned their lesson as they should."

Some idea of the eminently humanising effect of these razzias on all concerned, may be gathered from the following extract from an article in the *Friend of India* of April 1869. It refers to operations against the Hill tribes on the North Eastern frontier of Bengal, and it is only fair to add that the journal in question disapproves of the plan hitherto pursued to keep the Hill tribes in check, and proposes several measures for enlisting the co-operation of the Native Chieftains. But it is not to be supposed that the views of our officers in the North West differ very widely from those of our officers in the North East.

"All the military columns have now returned from the Looshai country, and, on the receipt of full reports of their proceedings, the Lieutenant-Governor will, we understand, grapple with the whole question left to him by his predecessors.

"How are we to put an end to these raids? The usual answer given by the officers on the frontier is this:—"Send an expedition to the Hills; shoot down the Hill-men wherever you find them; burn every village that you can get at; destroy all the means of human subsistence that you may come across; ring or cut down all the fruit-trees that you can discover; and return with flying colours, leaving behind you as many corpses of the Hill-people as you can, a desolate country, and a heritage of hate and revenge on the part of the savages." Such has been the the usual policy, but it has not been successful. Let Government records be consulted from 1830 to 1869; let the date, locality attacked, and the tribe attacking be mentioned, anywhere from Akyab to the Borail range; let the number of villagers killed, wounded, and missing be specified; then look for the punishment awarded and the justice administered, and it will be found to be worse than nothing. The expedition of 1869 has not formed an exception."†

* The Calcutta *Pioneer*, extracted from the *Homeward Mail* of April 5th, 1869.

† From the *Friend of India*, extracted from *Homeward Mail*, May 17th, 1869.

Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri
NSDL
Technology, Trust & Reach
on 07 January, 2017